

DELL™ DIMENSION™ L Series

Affordable Business Desktop

- Intel® Celeron™ Processor at 566MHz
- 32MB SDRAM (up to 512MB)
- 7.5GB5 (4400 RPM) Ultra ATA HD (up to 30GB5)
- 15" (13.8" vis) E550 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics 48X Max CD-ROM
- SB 64V Integrated Sound
- Integrated Intel® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
- MS® Windows® 98 & MS® Works Suite 2000 and Norton® AntiVirus™ 2000
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty² 1-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

699 © E-VALUE CODE 05878-590906 BUSINESS LEASE: \$19/MO., 48 MOS."

DELL™ DIMENSION™ L Series

Affordable Business Desktop

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 733MHz
- 64MB SDRAM (up to 512MB)
- 7.5GB5 (4400 RPM) Ultra ATA HD (up to 30GB5)
- 15" (13.8" vis) E550 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics 48X Max CD-ROM
- SB 64V Integrated Sound, harman/kardon Speakers
- Integrated Intel® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
- MS® Windows® Me39 & MS® Works Suite 2000 and Norton® AntiVirus™ 2000
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty² 1-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

\$899 **E-VALUE CODE** 05878-590908 BUSINESS LEASE: \$25/MO., 48 MOS."

DELL M OPTIPLEX M GX110

Network-Optimized Managed PC

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 733MHz
- 128MB SDRAM (up to 512MB)
- 10GB⁵ SMART® II ATA HD (up to 40GB⁵)
- 15" (13.8" vis) E550 Monitor (up to Flat Panel)
- 48X Max CD-ROM
- Integrated 3Com® 10/100 NIC
- MS® Windows® 2000 Professional
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics
- OptiFrame[™] Mini-Tower Tool-less Chassis
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

BUSINESS LEASE: \$33/MO., 48 MOS."

DELL™ BUSINESS NOTEBOOKS:

DELL INSPIRON 3800

Design and Affordability Notebook

- Intel® Celeron™ Processor at 500MHz
- 12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
- 32MB SDRAM 4.8GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD ■ Modular 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-P 3D® Video
- MS® Works Suite 2000
- MS® Windows® Me39
- 1-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

BUSINESS LEASE: \$36/MO., 48 MOS."

■ 3-Yr NBD On-site Service³, add \$149

DELL INSPIRON 5000e

NEW-Performance and Mobility Notebook

- Intel® Celeron™ Processor at 600MHz
- 15" XGA Display
- 64MB SDRAM 5GB5 Ultra ATA HD
- Modular 24X Max Variable CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™ 128 3D° Video
- 59WHr Li-Ion Battery
- MS® Office 2000 Small Business
- MS® Windows® Me39
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

\$1999 **E-VALUE CODE** 05878-890919 BUSINESS LEASE: \$55/MO., 48 MOS."

Upgrade to CompleteCare[™] Service²⁰, add \$169

DELL LATITUDE CPt

Network-Optimized Notebook

- Intel® Celeron™ Processor at 500MHz
- 12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
- 32MB SDRAM 4.8GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM/Floppy Drive
- MS® Windows® 98, Second Edition
- Li-lon Battery w/ExpressCharge™ Technology
 Dual Pointing Touchpad and Pointing Stick
- Internal 56K Capable SoftModem
- 1-Yr NBD On-site Service

BUSINESS LEASE: \$41/MO., 48 MOS."

■ Upgrade to 14.1" Active Matrix Display, add \$250

DELL™ SERVERS AND WORKSTATIONS:

DELL™ POWEREDGE™ 1300

Affordable Entry Level Server

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 700MHz (up to 800MHz)
- Dual Processor/RAID Capable
- 64MB 100MHz ECC SDRAM (up to 1GB)
- 9GB⁵ 7200 RPM Ultra-2/LVD SCSI HD (up to 36GB5)
- 144GB Internal Storage Capacity
- NIC & Integrated SCSI Controllers
- 48X Max CD-ROM
- Dell™ OpenManage™ Server Management Solutions
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴ 7x24 Phone Support

1399 © E-VALUE CODE 05878-290913

- BUSINESS LEASE: \$39/MO., 48 MOS." ■ Small Business Upgrade Bundle, add \$1877
- 2nd Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 700MHz, add \$699

DELLT POWEREDGE TO 2400

Workgroup Server

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 733MHz (up to 933MHz)
- Dual Processor Capable
- 128MB 133MHz ECC SDRAM (up to 2GB)
- 9GB⁵ 7200 RPM Ultra-2/LVD SCSI HD (up to 36GB⁵ 10K RPM)
- Up to 288GB Hot-swappable Internal Storage Capacity
- Integrated NIC/SCSI Controllers
- 40X Max CD-ROM
- Redundant Hot-swappable Power Supplies
- Dell[™] OpenManage[™] Server Management
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴ 7x24 Phone Support

2199 © E-VALUE CODE 05878-290921 BUSINESS LEASE: \$61/MO., 48 MOS.11 Red Hat® Linux™ 6.2, add \$1¾9 \$0

DELL™ PRECISION™ 420

Advanced Performance Workstation

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 733MHz (up to 933MHz)
- Dual Processor/RAID Capable
- 128MB RDRAM (up to 1GB)
- 40GB5 7200 RPM FIDE HD (220GB Internal SCSI Storage Capacity)
- 17" (16.0" vis) P780 FD Trinitron® Monitor
- 32MB 4X AGP Synergy Force Graphics Card
- Integrated NIC & Sound 48X Max CD-ROM
- MS® Windows® 2000 Professional ■ 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴
- 7x24 Dedicated Workstation Phone Tech Support

\$2629 © E-VALUE CODE 05878-490926a BUSINESS LEASE: \$73/MO., 48 MOS."

DELL™ HOME DESKTOPS:

DELL™ HOME NOTEBOOKS:

DELL DIMENSION L Series

Affordable Desktop Solution

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 733MHz
- 64MB SDRAM
- 7.5GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD
- 15" (13.8" vis) E551 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM
- SoundBlaster 64V PCI LC Sound Card
- PC Speakers
- MS® Works Suite 2000 MS® Windows® Me³⁹
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty² 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

\$899 © E-VALUE CODE 05878-500908b

AS LOW AS: \$25/MO., 48 MOS.17

DELL™ INSPIRON™ 3800

Design and Affordability

- Intel® Celeron™ Processor at 500MHz
- 12.1" SVGA TFT Display
- 32MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 4.8GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility M-M1 3D* Video
- 26.5WHr Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology
- MS* Works Suite 2000 MS* Windows* Me³⁹
- 1-Yr Ltd. Warrantv²
- 1-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

\$1399 **E-VALUE CODE** 05878-800913 AS LOW AS: \$38/MO., 48 MOS.17

DELL^{IM} DIMENSION^{IM} 4100

Advanced Performance, Smart Value

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 866MHz
- 128MB SDRAM at 133MHz
- 20GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD
- 17" (16.0" vis, .26dp) M781 Monitor
- 32MB NVIDIA TNT2 M64 4X AGP Graphics
- 12X Max DVD-ROM
- SB Live! Value Digital
- Altec Lansing® ACS-340™ Speakers with Subwoofer
- V.90 56K Capable⁶ PCI Telephony Modem for Windows®
- MS® Works Suite 2000 MS® Windows® Me39
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty² 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

\$1599 **E-VALUE CODE** 05878-500915y AS LOW AS: \$44/MO., 48 MOS.17

DELL™ INSPIRON™ 5000e

Performance and Mobility

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 750MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 15" Ultra XGA TFT Display
- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 10GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 16MB ATI RAGE Mobility™ 128 3D* Video
- 59WHr Li-Ion Battery
- Internal V.90 56K Capable⁶ FaxModem
- MS* Works Suite 2000 MS* Windows* Me3
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty²
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

\$2879 © 6-VALUE CODE 05878-800928a AS LOW AS: \$79/MO. 48 MOS.

DELL™ DIMENSION™ XPS B Series

Cutting-Edge Technology

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1GHz
- 128MB RDRAM
- 30GB⁵Ultra ATA HD
- 19" (17.9" vis, .24 .25AG) P991 FD Trinitron® Monitor
- NEW 32MB DDR NVIDIA GeForce2 GTS 4X AGP Graphics Card
- 12X Max DVD-ROM
- SB Live! Value Digital
- Harman Kardon HK-595 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- V.90 56K Capable PCI Telephony Modem for Windows®
- MS® Works Suite 2000 MS® Windows® Me3®
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty² 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

\$2499 © E-VALUE CODE 05878-500924y AS LOW AS: \$68/MO., 48 MOS.17

DELL™ INSPIRON™ 7500

Mobile Desktop

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 750MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 15.4" Super XGA TFT Display
- 96MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 20GB⁵ Ultra ATA HD
- Removable Combo 8X Max DVD-ROM and Floppy
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-P 3D® Video
- 79WHr Li-Ion Battery
- Internal V.90 56K Capable FaxModem
- MS® Office 2000 Small Business Plus Encarta® 2000
- MS® Windows® Me³
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty²
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

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DELL™ DIMENSION™ 4100

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- 128MB SDRAM (up to 512MB)
- 10GB⁵ (7200 RPM) Ultra ATA HD (up to 75GB)
- 17" (16.0" vis) E770 Monitor
- 16MB ATI Graphics Card 48X Max CD-ROM
- SoundBlaster 64V Sound Card
- harman/kardon Speakers
- V.90/56K° PCI Telephony Modem for Windows°
- MS® Windows® Me3® & Office 2000 Small Business
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty² 1-Yr NBD On-site Service⁴

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DELL™ INSPIRON™ 5000e

NEW—Performance and Mobility Notebook

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 600MHz
- 15" Super XGA+ TFT Display
- 64MB SDRAM; 5GB5 Ultra ATA HD ■ Modular 24X Max Variable CD-ROM/Floppy Drive
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™ 128 3D® Video
- 59WHr Li-Ion Battery
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Millennia 400	\$115.00	\$71.99
Millennia 450	\$115.00	\$71.99
Millennia MAX 450	\$115.00	\$71.99
Gateway	Kingston	Crucial
G6-450	\$115.00	\$71.99
G6-400	\$115.00	\$71.99
Performance 450	\$115.00	\$71.99
IBM	Kingston	Crucial
Aptiva (2153) Model E2U	\$111.00	\$71.99
Aptiva (2139) Model E5D	\$111.00	\$71.99
HP	Kingston	Crucial
Pavilion 4530	\$126.00	\$71.99
Pavilion 4535	\$126.00	\$71.99
Kayak XU PC Workstation		
440BX Chipset	\$143.00	\$89.99
Vectra VL Series 8	\$111.00	\$71.99
Apple	Kingston	Crucial
Mac (G3-350)	\$111.00	\$71.99
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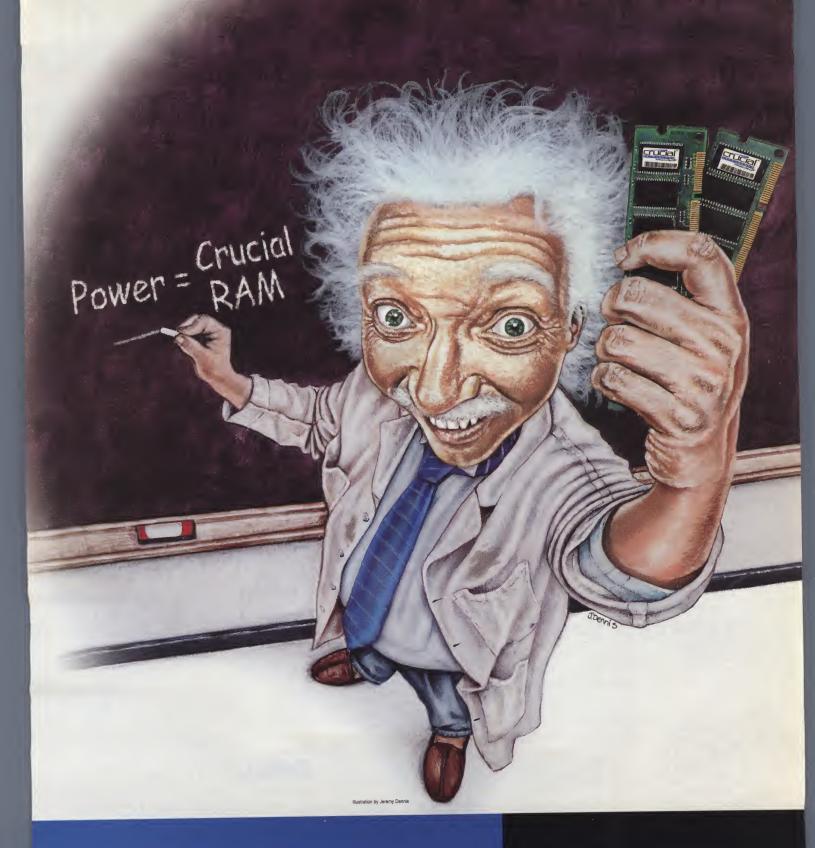


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DELL " DIMENSION " L Series

Affordable Desktop Solution

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 733MHz
- 64MB SDRAM 7.5GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- 15" (13.8" vis) E551 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM Drive
- SoundBlaster 64V PCI LC Sound Card
- PC Speakers
- MS® Works Suite 2000 MS® Windows® Me39
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty² 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

\$899 © E-VALUE CODE 05869-500908b

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- 17" (16.0" vis) E770 Monitor, add \$70
- Altec Lansing® ACS-340™ Speakers with Subwoofer,

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contents

features

Light Makes Right

130

ULTRAPORTABLE NOTEBOOK ROUNDUP

Today's ultraportable notebooks pack fast processors, plenty of hard drive space, and an average battery life exceeding 2 hoursperfect for business travelers looking to lighten their load, but not their productivity.

• Compag Armada M300 • Dell Latitude LS H400ST • HP OmniBook 900

• IBM ThinkPad 570£ 6AU • Toshiba Portégé 3440CT



Scanning for Savings.

FLATBED SCANNER ROUNDUP

The latest entry-level flatbed scanners give you simple USB setup, generous software bundles, and easy operation. And with prices dipping below \$100, they're supremely light on your budget.

• Acer 640BU • HP ScanJet 3400C • Microtek ScanMaker 3700

• Umax Astra 3400 • Visioneer 6200 USB



Picking the Perfect PC

SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO DESKTOPS

by David English

With the wealth of CPU and component choices available, picking a desktop today is challenging. Our Guide helps you sort through your options and assemble a winning combination.



Sign On Once, Surf Often

UNIVERSAL SIGN-ON SERVICES by Lynn Ginsburg

With all the things you have to do in a day, why waste time signing in and out of your favorite Web sites? Universal login services can make surfing the Web a whole lot easier.

• digitalme • Microsoft Passport • v-Go 2.0



170

Dialing Without Dollars

WEB PHONE CALLS by John R. Quain

Voice over IP is enabling thousands of consumers to make and receive free long-distance calls. Read our feature to find out how to get in on the action.

Home Home on the Web

REAL-ESTATE SITES by Nancy A. Lang

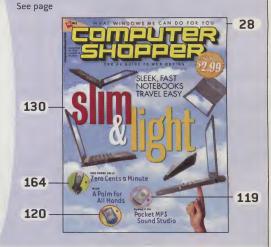
It's time to break it off with your real-estate agent and start spending some quality time with your browser. Information-packed real-estate sites take a lot of the legwork out of findingand financing—your next home.

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news

Net Now...

28

Is Windows Millennium Edition worth the hassle of upgrading from 98? We weigh its benefits against the potential headaches. Also, devices powered by Transmeta's Crusoe processor hit the market for the holidays.

B2B Buzz

Matchmaker services bring together IT buyers and sellers. A report reveals e-tailers are unprepared for the 2000 holiday shopping season. And the Web marketplaces of tomorrow will achieve new levels of sophistication and flexibility.

Hot Gear

- I-Jam Win-Jam Digital Audio Player
- Sony DCR-PC5 Handycam
- Minds@Work Digital Wallet.
- 52
- Wild Planet Spy Detectors SportBrain Starter Kit Ericsson HBH-10 Mobile Headset
- Olympus C-211 Zoom Leitz You2 Cool-Seal Laminator Philips UGO S-Lite and X-Lite
- Royal Vista Toshiba MEA110
- Crypto Laptop Case

best buys

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IBM ThinkPad i Series 1300 JUST \$2,049

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To find out more about IBM technology for small business.



contents...continued

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Site Reviews for Online Shopping....

Finding good shopping sites on the Web doesn't have to be a chore. We give you the scoop on hundreds of Net stores where you can buy everything from PCs to CDs. PIUS We scare up a host of Halloween sites.

business buyer



NETWORKABLE

Is Rent-a-LAN Right for You? 208

We look at the offerings of three leading subscription-based computing services to help you determine which solution works best for your business.

e-Services and Tools....

Many Messages, One In-Box: Retrieve e-mail, faxes, and voice messages from a single location.

Building Your Business..... .206

Great Site Designs Spur Sales: These eight design tips help you build a site that fosters buying.

Linux for Business...... 211

Best Linux for Business: Get advice on choosing the right distribution.

elp & how to



Building a PC From Scratch 244

Time to put your old PC out to pasture? Instead of buying a new system, you can build one yourself.

The Hard Edge by Alice Hill & Bill O'Brien

Bill fights for his identity, and Alice weighs the advantages of the mile-high calling

Alfred Poor's Computer Cures 248

Alfred advises on performing e-mail merges and fixes a never-ending ScanDisk procedure.

254 Buying Advisor...

Language Lessons via Web Cam: We help a long-distance language tutor set up a videoconferencing system.

opinions

John Blackford	Jim O'Brien80
John Dvorak	Michael Slater

reference

Site Index 257	Showcase Premiere2	13
This issue's URLs and ZDNet downloads.	Showcase General 2	70
Product Index 261	Ad Index 2	88

from the readers

from the editor

Janice Chen12	Feedback Forum
January Chich	i ccabacit i oraili

Instant Price Checks!

Get real-time pricing and availability for any product reviewed in this magazine: From your desktop Web browser or any Web-enabled cell phone, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter the numeric code listed with any product review.

For Palm VII users: Go to wireless.zdnet.com, select "ZDNet To Go," and download the ZDNet Palm VII application.



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reviews

DESKTOPS

Sony VAIO PCV-J100	94
Dell Dimension 4100	
CyberPower Athlon Special	98
HARDWARE	

Epson Stylus Color 670	102
Fujifilm FinePix 4700 Zoom	102
Maxtor DiamondMax 60	
Boston Acoustics BA4800	106

NETWORKS

Actiontec USB InternetPhoneWizard
Intel AnyPoint Phoneline Home Network
10 Mbps USB Model 107

MOBILE

NEC Versa SXi	1	10
Dell Inspiron 5000e		
Acer TravelMate 524TXV		
Kodak PalmPix Camera		
Boxlight XD-9m	1	18
RIM 957 Wireless Handheld	1	19
Creative Nomad II MG	1	19
Ibuypower.com Pocket Espresso PC	1	20
Palm m100	1	20

SOFTWARE

Extensis Portfolio 5.0	1	22)
Astound Presentation 7.0	1	22)
Adobe LiveMotion	1	24	ļ
Peachtree Complete Accounting 8.0	1	24	ļ
·			

• Real Entertainment Center Plus • Generations Grande Suite 8.0 • Canon OfficeReady Business Plans126

GAMES

20

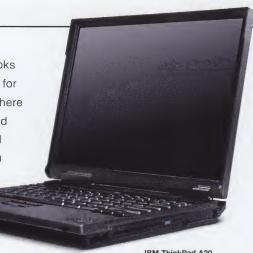
- Backyard Baseball 2001 Diablo II
- Motocross Madness 2 Star Trek: Klingon Academy128

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THINKPAD NOTEBOOKS. There's a range of ThinkPad notebooks available to meet the needs of your staff - whether they're looking for improved productivity while online, or enhanced portability everywhere else. The new ThinkPad i Series 1300 features a built-in modem and Easy Launch buttons to get you on the Internet fast.² The ThinkPad A20 offers the convenience of the modular Ultrabay™ 2000, so you can easily swap options, drives and more between machines.

And for serious travelers, there's the ThinkPad T20. With its Titanium Composite cover³ and sleek design, the ThinkPad T20 is tough, light, and ready to go when you are. What's more, it comes with a powerful Intel® Pentium® III processor, so you can get the job done, with more efficiency than ever.





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'Prices shown are prices available from IBM directly; reseller prices may vary for ThinkPad i Series Part #1171-61U, Diskette Drive Part #05K9276, USB Hub Part #00N8215; ThinkPad A Series Part #2628-41U, Memory Upgrade Part #Upgrade Part #33L3136, Warranty Service Upgrade Part #30L9199; NetVista A20 Part #6029-E2U, 17* Monitor Part #17M0N05, Printer Part #09N9912, Digital Camera Part #10K3360, Printer Part #09N9780; NetVista Part #6831-EAU, account, available separately. *Titanium Composite Carbon Fiber Reinforced Plastic has three times the strength of ABS plastic as tested by IBM using the high flex modulus test on 2/28/00. Available on select models. *MHz measures only node; battery optimization mode is approximately 80% of maximum performance mode. *GB means one billion bytes when referring to hard drive capacity. Accessible capacity may vary. *Variable read rate. Actual playback speed will v currently limit maximum download speeds to about 53Kbps. Actual speeds depend on many factors and are often less than the maximum possible. *Gome software may differ from its retail version (if available), and may not include us representations or warranties regarding non-IBM products. *Weight and thickness may vary due to vendor components, manufacturing process and options. *SuccessLease is offered and administered in the US and Canada by third-party. only, installing in the US. A documentation fee and first month's payment due at lease signing. Any taxes are additional. Other lease terms and structures are available. Offer may be withdrawn or changed without notice. Options must be sumer or home service offerings, call 1-888-ShoplBM. "For terms and conditions or copies of IBM's Statement of Limited Warranty, call 1 800 772-2227 in the US and in Canada call 1 800 426-2255. Limited warranty includes International Canada call 1 800 426-2255. Limited warranty includes International Canada call 1 800 426-2255. Limited warranty includes International Canada call 1 800 426-2255. Limited warranty includes International Canada call 1 800 426-2255. any time, without notice. SuccessLease and all IBM product names are registered trademarks or trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation. Lotus and SmartSuite are registered trademarks of Lotus Development Corpo Corporation. Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others. ©2000 IBM Corp. All rights reserved.



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Fleet-Footed Computing

uch to my fiancé's chagrin, I've been toying with the idea of buying a foldable Razor scooter. You know the one: a foot-powered contraption 12-year-olds across the country have been using to terrorize pedestrians. He thinks it's a geeky fad. I think it could cut my 15-minute commute on foot to a 5-minute scoot.

But before I start kicking my way to work, I'll have to lighten the load in my backpack to achieve maximum velocity. Lucky for me, slim and light have become watchwords for almost every technology product these days.

Take notebooks, for example. Travelers who wanted lightweight computers once had to settle for anemic subnotebooks with tiny screens and limited capabilities, but no more. Our cover story, "Light Makes Right" (p. 130), reports on the new generation of ultraportable notebooks.

They're thinner than ever but fully loaded with heavyweight features. In fact, Compaq's Armada M300-the Ally McBeal of

notebooks at just 3.4 pounds and 0.9 inches thick-manages to pack in a 600MHz Pentium III, a 12.1-inch screen, and a 12GB hard drive. Equipped with docking stations or external drive options, all five of the notebooks in our roundup offer the functionality you'll need for conventional business-computing tasks.

Anyone who road-trips to make presen-

tations will also be impressed with the Boxlight XD-9m ultraportable projector, reviewed on p. 118. Despite its



under-5-pound weight, this lithe DLP projector puts out an image bright and sharp enough to compete with much heftier models.

Of course, traveling light isn't all business. The Creative Nomad II MG (reviewed on p. 119) is smaller and lighter than a pack

of cards, but provides hours of MP3 entertainment on the go. And on p. 120, you'll find Palm's new m100, a PDA for the rest of us. With a slick design that rivals the pricey Palm V for sheer style, the new Palm's low price of \$149 will have the counter-corporate set beaming in no time.

It isn't just mobile products that are get-

ting sleeker. In our über-guide to buying a desktop system-"Picking the Perfect PC," on p. 148-you'll notice that not only



have monitors become size-conscious, but that system boxes are becoming almost aerodynamic.

More and more monitors are coming in short-neck designs that take up less desktop real estate than regular-depth monitors. In fact, a short-neck 19-inch monitor sticks out less in back than a standard 17-inch one does. But if you're really looking to get slim and trim, choose a flat-panel LCD monitor. You'll pay a premium, but this year's

LCD monitors have seen lower prices and better technology than in 1999.

When it comes to the systems themselves, you have increasingly varied options in form factor. If you're willing to sacrifice nearly all expansion options, supersleek PCs like IBM's NetVista X40 are so compact that you might think the CPU box is missing. For a less dramatic but still fairly diminutive option, check out our review of the Sony VAIO PCV-J100 (p. 94), which offers digital-video-production capabilities in a petite minitower case.

Whether you're shopping for desktop computers, monitors, handheld devices, notebooks, or any other technology tool, chances are the newest models are smaller, lighter, sleeker, and brighter than their predecessors were. And that's good news for those of us who like to hit the road kicking.

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The ViewSonic VP151 really sparkles, with dual-mode-inputs, built-in sound, pivot support, wide viewing angles, and even picture-in-picture display of composite video. It earns our high-end Editors Choice. -PC Magazine, May 2000



VP151 May 2000

ViewPanel® Series						
ViewSonic Model	Screen Viewable	Special Feature	Maximum Resolution	Analog Interface	Bezel Integrated Speakers	
VG150	15.0	WALL MOUNTABLE	1024 x 768	YES		
VP151 [†]	15.0	COMPOSITE VIDEO	1280 x 1024	DIGITAL/ ANALOG	YES	
VG151†	15.0	PIVOT	1024 x 768	DIGITAL/ ANALOG		
VP181 [†]	18.1	COMPOSITE VIDEO	1600 x 1200	Digital/ Analog	YES	
VG181 ∞	18 1	PIVOT	1280 x 1024	DIGITAL		

†Currently audio, composite video and picture-in-picture features are supported via analog only. ∞Also available in black bezel

Professional Series				
ViewSonic Model	CRT Size/ Viewable	Horizontal Dot Pitch/ Aperture Grille Pitch	Maximum Resolution	TCO Low Radiation
PF77 #∆	17/16.0	0.25/AG	1600 x 1280	TCO '99
PF775 #	17/16.0	0.25/AG	1600 x 1280	TCO '99
PS775 *	17/16.0	0.22	1600 x 1280	TCO '99
PF790 #	19/18.0	0.25-0.27/AG	1600 x 1280	TCO '99
PF795 #	19/18.0	0.25-0.27/AG	1920 x 1440	TCÒ '99
PS790*	19/18.0	0.22	1600 x 1280	TCO '99
P810	21/20.0	0.22	1800 x 1440	TCO '99
P815**	21/20.0	0.22	1800 x 1440	TCO '99
PF815 #	22/20.0	0.25-0.27/AG	1920 x 1440	TCO '99

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E ^{2®} Series					
ViewSonic Model		Horizontal Dot Pitch	Maximum Resolution	OnView®	Low Radiation
EF70#	17/16.0	0.25/AG	1280 x 1024	YES	MPR-II
E655	15/13.8	0.24	1280 x 1024	YES	TCO '92
E771	17/16.0	0.24	1280 x 1024	YES	MPR-II
E773	17/16.0	0.23	1280 x 1024	YES	TCO '99
E790 [∞]	19/18.0	0.23	1600 x 1280	YES	TCO '95

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MultiMedia Series					
ViewSonic Model		Horizontal Dot Pitch	Maximum Resolution	TCO Low Radiation	Speakers
M50	15/13.8	0.24	1280 x 1024	TCO '92	2-watt (X2)
M70 ∞	17/16.0	0.24	1280 x 1024	TCO '92	2-watt (X2)
G70m	17/16.0	0.23	1280 x 1024	TCO '99	3-watt (X2)
G90m	19/18.0	0.22	1600 x 1200	TCO '99	3-watt (X2)

∞Also available in black bezel

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Graphics Series					
ViewSonic Model	CRT Size/ Viewable	Horizontal Dot Pitch	Maximum Resolution	OnView Controls	TCO Low Radiation
G773	17/16.0	0.22	1280 x 1024	YES	TCO '92
G5773*	17/16.0	0.22	1280 x 1024	YES	TCO '92
GS790*	19/18.0	0.22	1600 x 1280	YES	TCO '92
G810	21/20.0	0.21	1600 x 1280	YES	TCO '99
GS815*	21/20.0	0.21	1920 x 1440	YES	TCO '99

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C	ptiq	uest°	Powered	by ViewSonic®
Model	CRT Size/ Viewable	Horizontal Dot Pitch	Maximum Resolution	Screen Treatment
Q41	14/13.2	0.24	1024 x 768	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare
Q51	15/13.8	0.24	1024 x 768	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare
Q55	15/13.8	0.24	1280 x 1024	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare, Anti-Reflection
Q71	17/16.0	0.23	1280 x 1024	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare, Anti-Reflection
Q75	17/16.0	0.21	1600 x 1200	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare, Anti-Reflection
Q95	19/18.0	0.23	1600 x 1200	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare, Anti-Reflection
Q115	21/19.6	0.22	1600 x 1200	Anti-Static, Anti-Glare, Anti-Reflection

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BIDDER BEWARE

Your July article on PC auctions ("Click Once, Click Twice, Sold!" p. 178), like so many of your other articles, was right on the money, but the words *caveat*

emptor should have been used in every second sentence. If I had a gripe with online auctions, it would be with the proxy bidding systems many sites use. Like it or not, they work for the auction house and not the consumer. It sounds good to have the system make bids for you, but when you look at a bid item, you

see a bunch of proxy icons sitting there. Guess what happens the moment you raise your bid? They all follow suit, and the "winner" typically pays close to retail. The bottom line: PC auctions used to offer some decent bargains. No more.

LUTZ MOECKEL

SORRY, UNCLE BILLY

Your feature "So Long, Shrink-Wrap" in the August issue (p. 182) was obviously biased toward software manufacturers. I understand how this could happen, given that your publication's revenues are based on the marketing of software and hardware.

Yes, wouldn't it be great if software manufacturers could rent their software for bloated fees instead of simply selling licenses for their usage? And wouldn't it be great if they could completely eliminate production costs, further maximizing their profits?

Don't hold your breath. Internet security concerns (which are increasing in direct proportion to Internet security violation scams) will prevent most intelligent business owners from "letting it all hang out" on the Internet via databases, PIMs, and other such programs. Also, the average consumer won't want to depend on online software that will be free at first, then available only for increasingly costly rental fees.

You also neglected to mention the most obvious alternative to bloated and pricey packaged software: freeware. The *alt.comp.freeware* newsgroup has identified viable free alternatives for every category of software, with the exception of TrueType font editors. It's even discussed creating its own non-bloated, open-code Web-surfing freeware. Of course, you won't print this letter, because you wouldn't want to upset Uncle Billy.

JOHN CORLISS



E-MAILS FROM HEAVEN

As a funeral director in Michigan, I must say, the July news story "Interment By Internet" (p. 48) surely raised my eyebrows. I do have one question for FinalThoughts.com, though. Once someone has registered his or her final wishes with the Web site, who makes contact with the deceased's family to let them know the wishes are documented? Do you boot up the computer when you reach the Pearly Gates and e-mail them? Just wondering.

CHARLES PERRY

EVERYWHERE WEB

I found the July feature "The Web Is Calling" (p. 186) an excellent review of where wireless has been and where it is going. While personal preferences, needs, or circumstances will dictate what combination of keypad and screen size users deploy, we still haven't seen the practical convergence of voice input with screen output. Until full capabilities are available, and the price of communication stays reasonable, nobody knows what users will exactly want.

< COMING NEXT MONTH >

Picky Editors Pick the Best

We may not have witnessed the fanciful inventions foreseen in science-fiction novels, but 2000 did mark some great milestones and innovations in technology. Next month, our editors separate the best from the rest to bring you Computer Shopper's Top 100 products for 2000.

Searing Graphics for Gamers

The right graphics card can enhance the speed and crispness of your games, making them lots more fun to play. We explain the different functions of today's hottest graphics cards, and tell you how to pick the right one for the games you play.

The Perfect Hit

With more than a billion Web pages out there, it may seem impossible to find the piece of information you need. We look at 10 top search engines, directories, and metasearch tools that make searching the Web easy. We also present a collection of tips and tricks for finding what you're looking for quickly.

Future Fusion: PC-TV

Long predicted, the conversion of the TV and PC is finally taking shape. A host of new Web sites are streaming original video content across the Internet, TV networks have harnessed the power of the Web to make television more interactive, and new devices let you store and personalize TV programming. Find out where the experts think convergence is heading.

Also, we still need to learn about the future cross-media etiquette of unified communications for mobile access and response. It should be an interesting shift from traditional telephones and messaging.

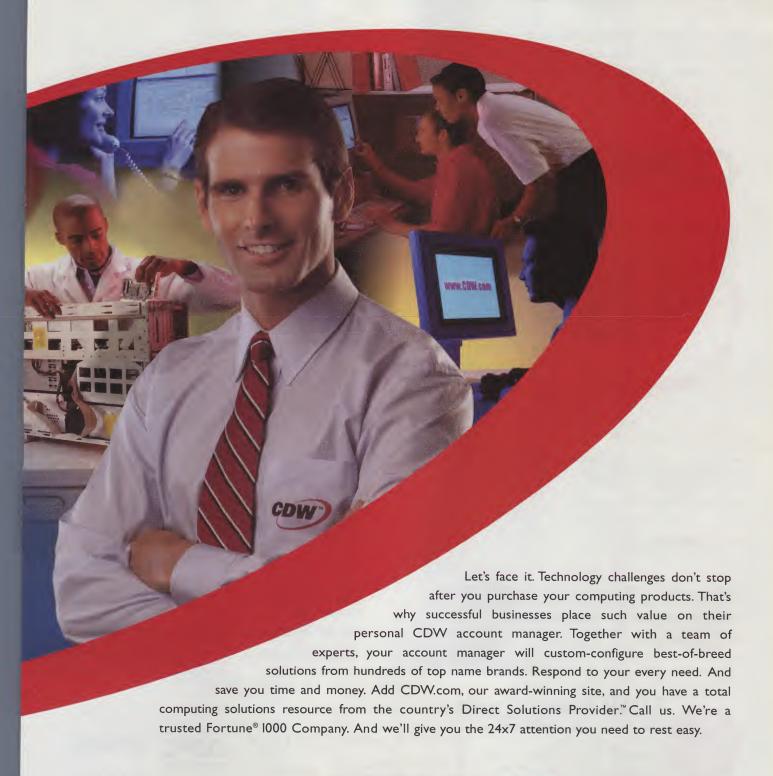
ART ROSENBERG

CORRECTIONS

After our September issue went to press, we learned that the Quantex SM933sx we reviewed (p. 106) is no longer available. According to a Quantex representative, "Our RDRAM-based packages, including this one, have been discontinued because of high pricing and low availability of RDRAM, as well as questionable performance benefits of 820/RDRAM solutions over 815e/SDRAM platforms."

Also, due to an editing error, we incorrectly reported the amount of hard drive space needed to save 135 4-minute CD-quality MP3 songs as 5GB in the September Tune-Up feature ("Easy as MP3," p. 280). The hard drive space needed to save this many files (where each file is roughly 3.7MB) is approximately 500MB.

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32MR	115520	64MB	115521
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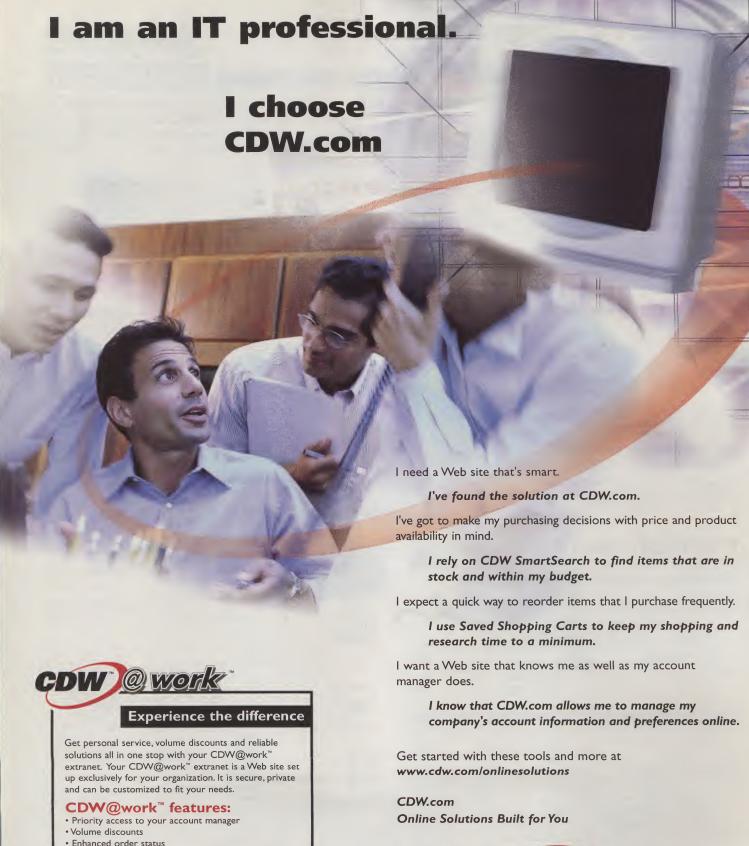


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Right for You?

The operating system's integrated multimedia, reliability, and home-networking features bring Windows 98 up to date for many users.

MUNRO

Microsoft

Corp. has finally gone millennial with the launch of Windows Millennium Edition (Me), its follow-up to Windows 98. The updated OS strives to create an easier, more satisfying experience for consumers, particularly those interested in digital audio, video editing, and home networking.

There are some notable improvements here, but do they warrant shelling out \$59.95 (the upgrade price for Windows 98 users, through Jan. 15, 2001), especially when some of the components are available as free downloads? The answer depends on how you use your computer.

Windows Me builds on Windows 98, borrowing a few features from Windows 2000 and adding some brand-new components designed to simplify and enhance multimedia computing. But it also aims to provide a more robust, reliable OS that requires less support and provokes fewer headaches. For instance, a nicely integrated help system and dozens of system tours let users better diagnose and resolve problems themselves.

Improvements center on four areas: PC health, digital media, the online experience, and home networking. We installed the OS on one of our own PCs to check out its stability and utility. To get a true end-user experience, we

upgraded an aging 300MHz K6-2 system with 192MB of RAM and a 15GB hard drive, running on a small home Ethernet network.

Overall, the upgrade from Windows 98 went surprisingly well. Windows Me deftly handled all our hardware and network settings, including the

shared-network WebRamp 310i modem. We were able to immediately access the home U.are.U. (We updated the software, however, and the fingerwas that the new version of

PC Health: Let's face it: If your PC won't run, nothing

Help and Support

network and Web, and all hardware worked, except an ancient version of DigitalPersona print-ID device then worked flawlessly.) Our only complaint Internet Explorer overwrote our preference of a blank starting page with the MSN home

The intuitive Help interface lets you revisit previous requests with the Recently Viewed Help Topics list.



else matters. And that makes PC health a paramount concern. To that end, Microsoft has eliminated Real Mode code in Windows Me, resulting in faster and more reliable bootup, as well as better overall stability. Most DOS programs will still work, although you won't be

able to boot to a DOS

Microsoft also offers improved hardware support this time around, working with vendors to create, test, and certify drivers that are better recognized by Me, thereby making installation easier and reasonably foolproof. Most existing Windows 98 products will work fine. For example, we installed the new U.are.U Pro

fingerprint-ID system without a hitch, even though it had not yet been certified for Windows Me.

Windows Me also protects critical system files against corruption or deletion, keeping the PC stable by automatically replacing files that have been changed. Its System Restore feature automatically takes "snapshots" of your configuration and lets you revert to an earlier working configuration should your system go south.

Digital Media and Entertainment: One of

the snazziest features of Windows Me is the new Windows Media Player 7, which combines a CD player, audio and video playback, CD



With Windows Media Player 7 you play audio, video, Internet radio, or CDs from one location, at the click of a mouse.

ripping, and an Internet radio tuner. Like other audio jukeboxes, the Media Player can be dressed up with "skins" and will visually interpret your music with a variety of abstract animations. And using the Windows Media Audio format at 64Kbps provides CD-quality audio files at half the size of corresponding 128Kbps MP3 files. The player won't rip CDs in MP3 format, although it does play MP3 files.

The new scanner and camera wizards let users import images from devices that support Windows Image Acquisition (WIA), a new alternative to TWAIN. Using the wizard, you preview your pictures, then download only the

Movie Maker lets you record from your digital

video camera or import video files for drag-anddrop-simple editing.

images you want to keep. You can rotate the downloaded images, if needed, and save them as IPEG files.

Microsoft addresses the craze for home digital-video editing with its new Movie

> Maker software, which lets you edit sound and video clips. Featuring technology found previously only in highend software, Movie Maker automatically breaks video input into separate clips for editing. The clips are assembled on a timeline and mixed with imported or recorded audio to produce a movie you save to

Microsoft Windows Media Format files to view and share.

Online Experience:

Windows Me ships with Internet Explorer 5.5, and includes support for Print Preview, which lets you see how a Web page will print before you commit it to paper. IE 5.5 also takes on Me's new Help look and feel for the MSN search window, making it easier to find sites, people, or businesses on the Web.

The integration of the Dial-Up Networking folder with the Connection manager makes establishing Web connections more intuitive. For instance, you can configure a dial-up connection and at the same

time set username and password in one central location. As part of the homenetworking improvements, Internet Connection Sharing (ICS) enables you to employ one PC to connect to the Web and share that con-

nection with all other machines on your home network, solving the single-phone-line battle that is waged daily in many households.

Home Networking:

Windows Me's new Home Networking wizard walks you through your network setup,

assigning unique machine names, enabling printer sharing, and even creating a disk that gets other machines onto the network with the right settings. Windows Me's support of Universal Plug and Play (UPnP) opens a wide choice of easily installed hardware from hardwired to wireless networking connections, and the adoption of Windows

2000's TCP/IP stack makes it more stable. If things don't go well, the troubleshooter does a good job of helping you figure out what went wrong.

TO ME, OR NOT TO ME?

Overall, like Windows 98, Windows Me isn't a must-have for everyone. If your current Windows 98 machine is humming along smoothly and you're not installing new hardware or a home network anytime soon, you probably don't need to upgrade. If you want, you can download Internet Explorer 5.5 and Windows Media Player 7 free from

Microsoft's Web site.

But if you tinker with your machine periodically, you'll find that the system file-protection and restore features may be well-worth the upgrade price. Moreover, if you want to install a home network, share printers, and establish new Internet connections, Windows Me can make it easier. And better support for new technology and devices will also make the Me upgrade appealing if you expect to add new hardware in the future.

All things considered, Windows Me is an attractive face-lift to Windows 98. Those who buy new consumer PCs will automatically get the new OS. But those who plan to hang on to their Windows 98 systems a while should carefully weigh their current and future hardware needs. Many might



The Windows Me Home Networking wizard deftly walks you through the intricacies of network setup.

do well to cool their urge to upgrade until the first Windows Me service pack arrives.

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AWARDS*

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Armada E500 — WinList WinMag.com, March 2000

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-Don Willmott

It's a Woman's Web

Women on the Web overtook men early this year, comprising 50.4 percent of all U.S. Internet users, according to **Media Metrix** and **Jupiter Communications**. While the overall U.S. population is 51.1 percent female, double-x-chromosome surfers are gaining fast on their male counterparts. Here's where to find them:

- Young girls go for TV Web sites, music, and learning.
- Teens like fashion, shopping, and music.
- Young women look for communities focused on child care.
- Seniors like family, health, genealogy, and joke/fun pages.

Crusoe on Course For Debut

ransmeta Corp.'s Crusoe processor, a supersecret project unveiled in January, will find a home in notebooks and

Internet appliances by year's end.

Crusoe CPUs come in two flavors: the TM3200 for use in mobile Internet devices, and the TM5400 for ultraportable notebooks. Both are

engineered with codemorphing software that cuts the amount of power consumed without affecting performance. The TM5400 adds a batteryoptimizing technology called LongRun that helps it deliver up to 8 hours of notebook battery life on a single charge, according to Transmeta.

Crusoe has plenty of support from notebook manufacturers, including heavyweights such as IBM, NEC, and Hitachi. IBM commits to producing a Crusoe-powered notebook by year's end. While plans are sketchy, IBM says it may employ the chip in a consumer-oriented ThinkPad i Series notebook, rather than the ultraportable ThinkPad 240. NEC and Hitachi say users will see a product no earlier than year's end.

Compaq Computer Corp. also may market Crusoe-based products, if indirectly. Quanta Computer, the company that manufactures some notebooks for Compaq, has embraced the chip. The company also will manufacture IBM's Crusoe-

based notebook and Gateway's Web pad, which is being marketed with AOL and is due in early 2001.

Another source of Crusoebased Internet devices will be

ViewSonic Corp., which says it will deliver Transmeta-powered units by year's end.

-Richard S. Shim



ultraportable notebooks Both are Crusoe-powered ThinkPads.

Sign on the Virtual Line

hen President Clinton signed the Electronic Signatures Act on June 30, he ushered in a new era in which digital signatures have the same legal validity as those on paper. And that means there are fewer impediments to creating contracts and sending and receiving notices and disclosures online.

The result should benefit e-commerce, especially in emerging electronic market-places where deals made online are often consummated with old-fashioned FedEx shipments of contracts and documents that

must be signed. The potential savings of both time and costs are huge. In fact, some mortgage experts suggest that the cost of processing a mortgage will be cut in half when the entire process moves online.

But what exactly is an electronic signature? According to the new law, it's an "electronic sound, symbol, or process," and that yame definition leaves

that vague definition leaves big questions for legal and security experts to ponder.



President Clinton swipes his identity with a smart card.

Encryption is not part of the definition, nor is any specific technology. Though many companies are working on secure digital-signature technologies, the term "digital signature" doesn't appear in the law.

With so many logistical questions yet to be tackled, widespread adoption of e-signatures, and the cost savings that will

come with it, are still a few years away. So don't toss your pens just yet. — D. W.

Online in The Air

ow often have you sat squirming in your airline seat, thinking of what you could accomplish if only you had access to the Web and e-mail? Good news for frequent flyers: Several companies are working to develop satellitebased systems that will let you plug your laptop into an in-seat data port for high-speed Web

In Flight Networks plans to offer broadband Internet and e-mail access to commercial airlines late next year. The system



will transmit information to and from the aircraft via an existing network of satellites at blazing speeds of up to 800Kbps.

Similarly, Tenzing Communications will allow passengers to access e-mail and selected Web content (which is not live, but is updated during

the flight). It will require users to download software to use the system, and most airlines will charge passengers to use the service.

In October, Air Canada plans to begin a six-month test of the Tenzing system on six Boeing 767 aircraft flying North American routes. Cathay Pacific will install the Tenzing product on its planes starting in the

second quarter of 2001.

And later this year, Boeing will launch a similar service called Connexion by Boeing that will give flyers access to the Web and television using a high-speed satellite-based network. No carriers have signed up for the service yet, however. -Elaine X. Grant

On a regular

station's

The ser-

vice will

identify

the most

recently

frequency.

oving data pack ratsand byte-hoarding hamsters-have something to celebrate: IBM has tripled the storage capacity of its diminutive Microdrive. The \$499



So small, a hamster could handle it.

hard drive, which weighs I ounce and is engineered to fit in PDAs, digital cameras, and MP3 players, now stows a whopping IGB of data. IBM also released a \$399 512MB Microdrive for those with more moderate storage requirements.

(though you'll need to establish an account first, either by phone or Web). Most CDs listed on StarCD cost between \$12 and \$13.

Radio Star

eard it on the radio, gotta have it? Point your browser to StarCD (www.starcd.com). The site, which launched in 33 markets in July, allows you to identify and buy music aired on local radio stations.

It works like this: You hear a tune on the radio, then surf to StarCD, which monitors radio broadcasts and keeps track of the songs played. If you don't have a computer handy, you can access StarCD's database and buy CDs using a regular phone or a WAP-enabled wireless device. However you get there, the site enables you to quickly ID the song, artist, and CD title, then purchase the disc.

StarCD lists each city's radio-station call letters, format, and frequency, plus the most recent song title and artist. You can click on the speaker icon to hear a sound clip, on the song title to see other songs on the same album, on the artist to get a complete list of albums, or on the radio station to see a complete

playlist for the day.

To access the system using a WAPenabled device. go to www. starcd.com/wap, then follow prompts to listen to the song. In some markets, the company allows users to access the service by dialing *CD (*23) on a mobile phone.

phone, simply dial a local number and enter the radio

played song and give you the option to listen to a 30-second clip. If you like what you hear, you can opt to buy with a few key presses

\$600

DIGITAL CAMERAS

\$400

S100 \$578

cable, PC only

A snapshot of digital cameras found on computershopper.com for less than \$1,000

\$800

Agfa ePhoto 307 \$218 640x480 resolution, 4MB internal memory, automatic focus, no LCD, serial cable, Mac and PC

Casio QV-100 \$386

cable, Mac and PC

640x480 resolution, 32MB

internal memory, automatic focus, 1.8-inch LCD, serial

Kodak DC240 \$411 1,280x960 resolution, 8MB CompactFlash card, automatic and manual focus, optical zoom, 1.8-inch LCD, USB and serial cables, PC only

Fujifilm MX 2900 Zoom \$649 1,800x1,200 resolution, 8MB SmartMedia card, automatic and manual focus, optical zoom, 2-inch LCD, serial cable, Mac and PC

Epson 3000z \$888 2,544x1,904 resolution, 16MB CompactFlash card, automatic and manual focus, 1.8-inch LCD, USB and serial cables, optical zoom, Mac and PC

\$200

Canon PowerShot

1 600x1 200 resolution, 8MB CompactFlash card, automatic and manual focus, optical zoom, 1.5-inch LCD, USB

HP PhotoSmart

C500xi \$709 1,600x1,200 resolution, 16MB CompactFlash card, automatic and manual focus, optical zoom, 2-inch LCD, USB and serial cables, Mac and PC

Nikon Coolpix 990 \$889

2,048x1,536 resolution, 16MB CompactFlash card, automatic and manual focus, 1.8-inch LCD, USB and serial cables, optical zoom, Mac and PC

Source: computershopper.com, August 1

\$1,000

K

Online Sellers Unprepared for HOLIDAY 2000

The 2000 holiday shopping frenzy is fast approaching, and online sellers have a lot of work to do to keep up with demand. A recent report evaluating 50 top online sellers by Resource Marketing reveals not a single one has mastered the art of online gift services. Here are

- 44 percent of the sites don't offer gift-wrapping services.
- 90 percent don't have full-featured gift registries.

some of the study's

findings:

- Less than 25 percent let consumers search by more than one criterion.
- Only 18 percent offer live customer support.

The report also revealed the

following specific information:

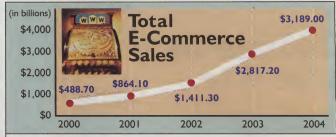
- Beyond.com's Quick Buy option lets you buy only one item at a time, and you must re-enter all your information with each transaction.
- A search for wooden trains in Amazon.com's toy section returned 240 results, including a plastic ambulance.
- Crate & Barrel snail mails purchase confirmations.
- E-mail notification of a Banana Republic transaction came from the Gap.
- Instead of authorizing a return, a customer-service rep at Egghead.com suggested keeping the product or
 - selling it to a friend.

 A kite
 ordered from
 BlueLight.com
 arrived with
 no invoice,
 packing slip, or
 clue to the
 company's
 identity.
 - Wal-Mart's site

(www.walmart.com) is replete with dead links.

The report is a result of thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of secret cyber shopping. Researchers rated sites on 500 consumer-based measures and 14 performance factors.

-Nancy A. Lang



U.S. e-commerce—both B2B and B2C—will grow from just under \$500 billion this year to more than \$3 trillion by 2004, according to Forrester Research. That figure represents close to 50 percent of the worldwide total of \$6.8 trillion.

A Match Made in IT Heaven

new breed of e-marketplace is bringing together buyers and sellers of IT services. These marketplaces are generally free to users, while vendors pay a commission.

One recent entry, Cofix (www.cofix.com), lets businesses track and manage IT service contracts and assets, and procure services from vendors. "We're a value-added matchmaker," says Max Seybold, chief executive of Cofix. At press time, the company had 6,000 corporate accounts and 375 service providers. A typical user is a company with 20

employees and no IT administrator.

Here's how it works: After you enter asset information into the Cofix Power Tools application, you can maintain a service history of the equipment

and receive notification when service contracts expire. You can even order labels to identify each asset.

Cofix's SmartMarketplace feature lets you complete a "needs analysis" for each asset, compare offerings of various IT vendors, buy packaged services, or request a custom service plan. The SmartMarketEngine finds a package that already exists and generates a request for quote (RFQ). Sellers pay a 10 percent commission.

Another site focusing on comparing IT solutions is eJigsaw.com. "It normally takes a company eight weeks to search, compare, and evaluate IT solutions," says CEO Raghu Viswanathan. "We chop it down to 5 minutes."

The site tracks products across 16 solution channels. Of these, eight are IT solution providers, with ASPs and e-commerce being the most popular. "We don't evaluate the solutions," says Viswanathan. "We try to give you as many tools as you need to make that



Cofix brings together buyers and sellers of IT services.

decision yourself."

The site went live in May; at press time, it had 4,000 vendors and 7,000 solutions. Vendors pay an annual subscription fee of \$5,000. That includes an unlimited number of referrals and the ability to post press releases and white papers. For an extra fee, members can pay for positioning at the top. EJigsaw.com targets companies that range from 50-plus employees all the way up to the enterprise level. —N.A.L.

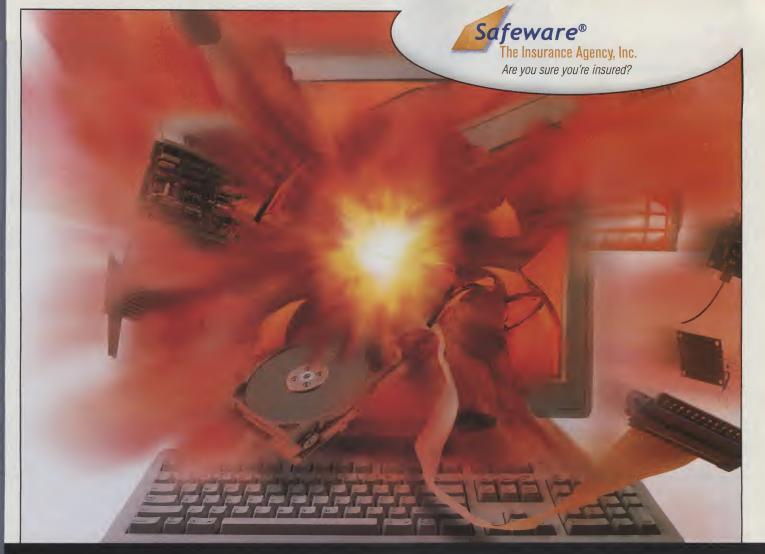
E-Marketplace Evolution

he e-marketplaces of tomorrow will propel dynamic pricing models to new levels of sophistication and flexibility, according to a report by Forrester Research. Forrester projects these real-time trading models, such as auctions and exchanges, will grow 25-fold over the next five years, reaching \$746 billion in 2004.

As e-marketplaces evolve over the next three years, companies will match purchasing requirements to appropriate dynamic auctions and automate recurring bidding decisions. They'll also define preferences for attributes other than price, such as quality, warranty service, and credit. In addition, they'll be able to offer bidding advantages to preferred partners.

The number of participating suppliers will grow, causing margins to tighten. And with deals materializing and evaporating with one click, buyers will have to develop new methods of evaluating the ever-changing mix of suppliers.

—N.A.L.



Safeware, a leader in insurance coverage for computer owners since 1982, offers comprehensive computer insurance plans for homes, students, schools and businesses. We protect your valuable computer equipment against:

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That's a good thing to know because:

- 49% of all computer-related losses occur as a result of accidents.*
- 28% of all computer-related losses occur as a result of theft.*
- ✓ 12% of all computer-related losses occur as a result of power surges.*

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Or call: 1-800-800-1492

for complete details, including limitations and exclusions.

*According to the 1999 Safeware Loss Study.

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Replacement Series, you carry the

Replacement Series, you carry the capability of a full desktop wherever you go. This one comes fully loaded, with the powerful Intel® Pentium® III processor, DVD-ROM or CD-ROM Drive, and IEEE-1394, TV-Out and Video-In Ports, plus an optional LS-120 or lomega® Zip Drive. The 101-key Keyboard and generous 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display make using this notebook pure pleasure. And there's plenty of battery power to keep you in business. Want faster graphics? The №2850 Speed & Agility Series handles demanding graphics applications like a dream, thanks to its fast 100MHz SDRAM, 2X AGP Chipset and 3D Graphics Accelerator. Plus, it comes with a crisp 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display and a built-in DVD-ROM or CD-ROM Drive. All this at 1.5" thin and under 7.15 pounds.

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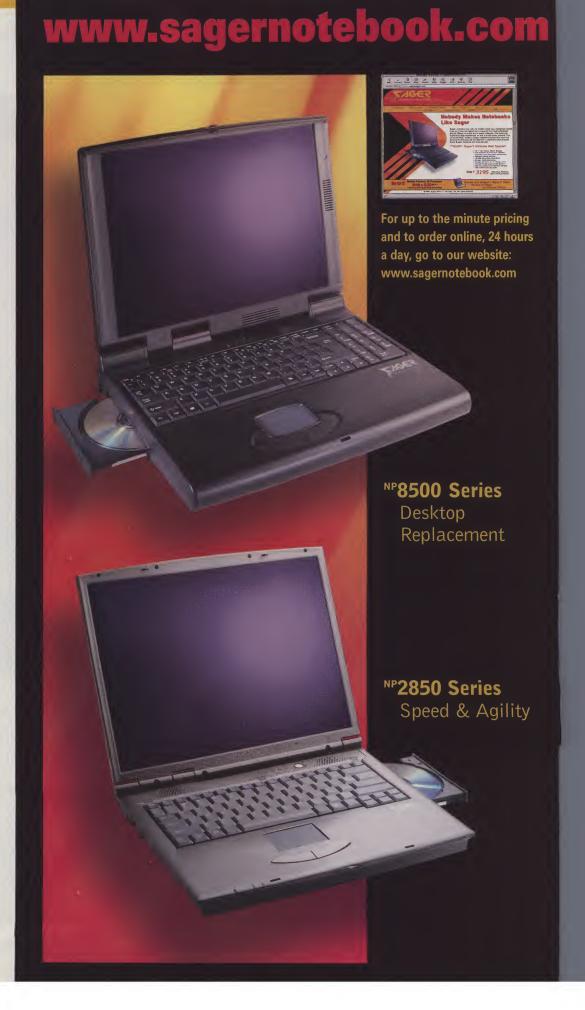
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- > 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
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- 20.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drive†
- Modular Iomega® Zip Drive and 3.5" FDD
- 15-cell 75.6w Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- 102-key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- IEEE-1394 Port
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 TV-Out Port & 1 Video-In Port
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- Deluxe Carrying Case
- Weight: 9.5 lbs with Battery
- 14.0"w x 11.0"d x 2.2"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$2945

NP**8550**i

- > 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Mobile Pentium® III Processor 700MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 128MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 20.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drive†
- 15-cell 75.6w Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- 102-key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- IEEE-1394 Port
 - 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with opt. LS-120, Iomega® Zip Drive or 2nd HDD
- 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
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- Microsoft® Windows® 98
- Deluxe Carrying Case
- Weight: 9.5 lbs with Battery
- 14.0"w x 11.0"d x 2.2"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

NP8550e

- > 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- > Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 128MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 10.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drivet
- > 15-cell 75.6w Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > 102-key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- > IEEE-1394 Port
- > 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with opt. LS-120, Iomega® Zip Drive or 2nd HDD
- 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 TV-Out Port & 1 Video-In Port
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 9.5 lbs with Battery
- > 14.0"w x 11.0"d x 2.2"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

NP8550 C

- 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Intel® Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 6.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drive†
- 15-cell 75.6w Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- 102-key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
 - IEEE-1394 Port
 - 256KB On-die L2 Cache
 - 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
 - Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with opt. LS-120, Iomega® Zip Drive or 2nd HDD
 - 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 TV-Out Port & 1 Video-In Port
- Other Ports: 2 USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard
- and Ext. CRT
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 9.5 lbs with Battery
- > 14.0"w x 11.0"d x 2.2"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$2195

NP2850s

- > 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Mobile Pentium® III Processor 750MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 128MB SDRAM
- 20.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drivet
- Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- > Thin (1.49") and Lightweight (7.1 lbs.)
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 2 USB Ports
- Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- Deluxe Carrying Case
- > 12.8"w x 10.51"d x 1.49"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$2545

NP2850e

- 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Mobile Pentium® III Processor 700MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 128MB 100MHz SDRAM 10.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drivet
- Integrated 10/100 Ethernet Thin (1.49") and Lightweight (7.1 lbs.)
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- > 3D Surround Sound
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface

Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

- 2 USB Ports
- Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® 98
- Deluxe Carrying Case 12.8"w x 10.51"d x 1.49"h

\$2345

NP2850

- > 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
 > Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
 Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- > 10.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 24X Max. CD-ROM Drive*
- > Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- Thin (1.49") and Lightweight (7.1 lbs.)
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- > 3D Surround Sound
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface

- Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® 98
- Deluxe Carrying Case > 12.8"w x 10.51"d x 1.49"h

> Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy \$2045

NP2850 C

- > 15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Intel® Celeron™ Processor 600MHz 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 6.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 24X Max. CD-ROM Drive* Integrated 10/100 Ethernet
- Thin (1.49") and Lightweight (7.1 lbs.)
- 128KB On-die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video > 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 2 USB Ports Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® 98 Deluxe Carrying Case

\$1895

> 12.8"w x 10.51"d x 1.49"h > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

- OPTIONS > Car Adapter > Iomega® Zip Drive (NP8500)
- > LS-120 Drive (NP8500) > Port Replicator (NP8500)
- > Numeric Keypad > 56K V.90 Modem^a > PCMCIA 10/100M
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- 8X Max DVD-ROM Drivet
- Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with LS-120 Drive or 2nd HDD
- > IEEE-1394 Port
- > 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 TV-Out Port
- > 2 USB Ports
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 6.8 lbs with Battery
- > 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.58"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

NP3350i

- > 14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Mobile Pentium® III Processor 700MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 128MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 10.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drivet
- Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with LS-120 Drive or 2nd HDD
- > IEEE-1394 Port
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 TV-Out Port
- > 2 USB Ports
- Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 6.8 lbs with Battery
- > 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.58"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$2145

NP3350e

- > 14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 10.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drive†
- Modular 3.5" FDD exchangeable with LS-120 Drive or 2nd HDD
- > IEEE-1394 Port
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface

- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 6.8 lbs with Battery
- > 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.58"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

NP3350 C

- > 14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display
- > Mobile Intel® Celeron™ Processor 600MHz
- > 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 6.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- > 24X Max. CD-ROM Drive*
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- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
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- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
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- > 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 6.8 lbs with Battery
- > 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.58"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$1695

NP3220s

- > 13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display
- Intel® Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
- 64MB SDRAM
- 10.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive Hot-Swappable Bay for 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drivet, 3.5" FDD (both included) or opt. LS-120 Drive
- Internal 56K V.90 Fax/Modem
- Thin (1.26") and Lightweight (5.6 lbs.)
- 2-Tone Beauty
- 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > 3D Surround Sound > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > Ports: USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 5.6 lbs with Battery
- > 12.05"w x 9.13"d x 1.26"h
- Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$1945

NP3220i

- > 12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Pentium® III Processor 600MHz
- 64MB SDRAM
- 6.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive Hot-Swappable Bay for 8X Max. DVD-ROM Drive†, 3.5" FDD (both included) or opt. LS-120 Drive
- Internal 56K V.90 Fax/Modem⁴
- Thin (1.26") and Lightweight (5.6 lbs.)
- > 2-Tone Beauty
- > 256KB On-die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > 3D Surround Sound
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > Ports: USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98 > Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 5.6 lbs with Battery > 12.05"w x 9.13"d x 1.26"h

> Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

\$1795

NP3220e

- > 13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Celeron™ Processor 500MHz
- 64MB SDRAM
- 6.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive Hot-Swappable Bay for 24X Max. CD-ROM*, 3.5" FDD (both included) or opt. LS-120 Drive
- Internal 56K V.90 Fax/Modem^a
- Thin (1.26") and Lightweight (5.6 lbs.)
- 2-Tone Beauty
- > 128KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > 3D Surround Sound
- Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > Ports: USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Deluxe Carrying Case > Weight: 5.6 lbs with Battery > 12.05"w x 9.13"d x 1.26"h
- > Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy \$1645

NP3220 C

- > 12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display
- Intel® Celeron™ Processor 500MHz
- 32MB SDRAM
- 6.0GB Ultra DMA Hard Drive
- Hot-Swappable Bay for 24X Max. CD-ROM*, 3.5" FDD (both included) or opt. LS-120 Drive
- Internal 56K V.90 Fax/Modem^a
- Thin (1.26") and Lightweight (5.6 lbs.)
- 2-Tone Beauty 128KB On-die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video > 3D Surround Sound
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > Ports: USB, 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® 98 Deluxe Carrying Case
- > Weight: 5.6 lbs with Battery 12.05"w x 9.13"d x 1.26"h

> Sager's Umbrella Protection Policy

- OPTIONS
- > LS-120 Drive Port Replicator (NP3350)
- > 2nd Hard Drive (NP3350) > 56K V.90 Modem^a
- > PCMCIA 10/100M Ethernet Card
- USB Video-Camera
- > PCMCIA 10/100M + 56K Lan > Numeric Keypad

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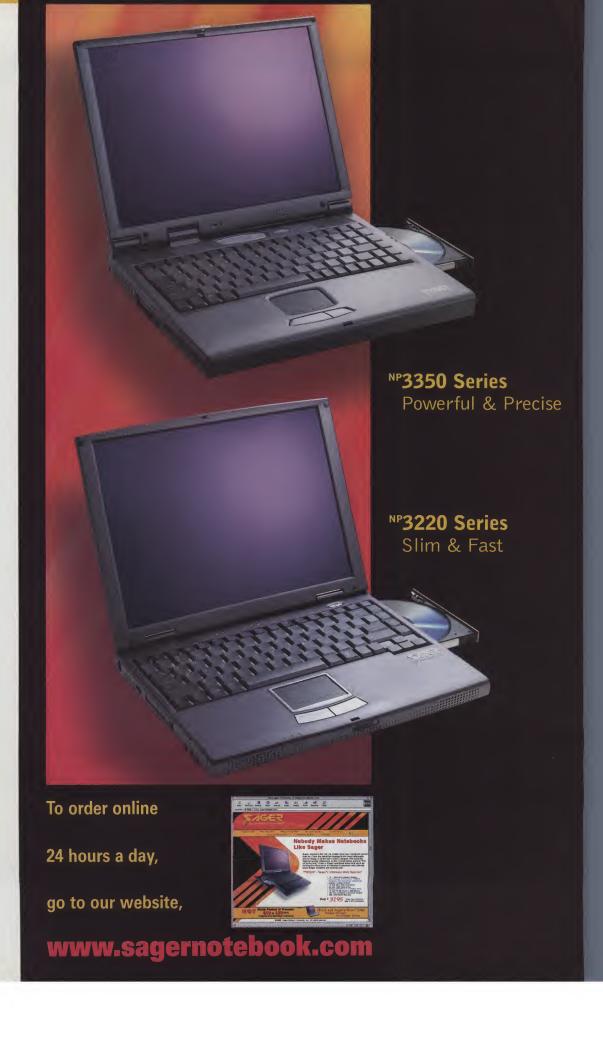
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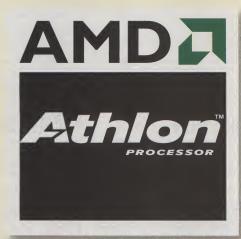
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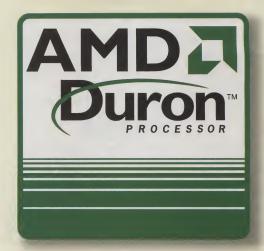
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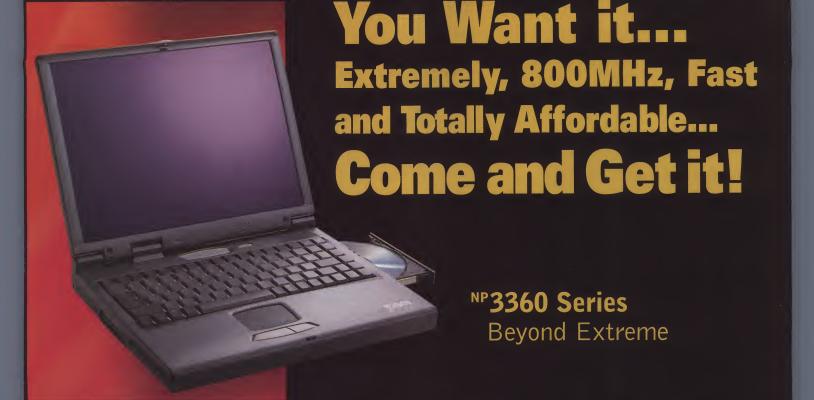


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- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > A4 Size Windows® 95 Keyboard
- > Weight: 6.8 lbs with Battery

- > Intel® Pentium® III Processor 700MHz > 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
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- Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface 1 TV-Out Port & 2 USB Ports
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I-Jam Win-Jam Digital Audio Player I-Jam Multimedia Schaumburg, IL; 888-326-4526 www.ijamworld.com

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Ericsson HBH-10 Mobile Headset Ericsson Mobile Communications Research Triangle Park, NC; 800-374-2776 mobile.ericsson.com

SECTION CONTINUES ON PAGE 59

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SECTION CONTINUES ON PAGE 64



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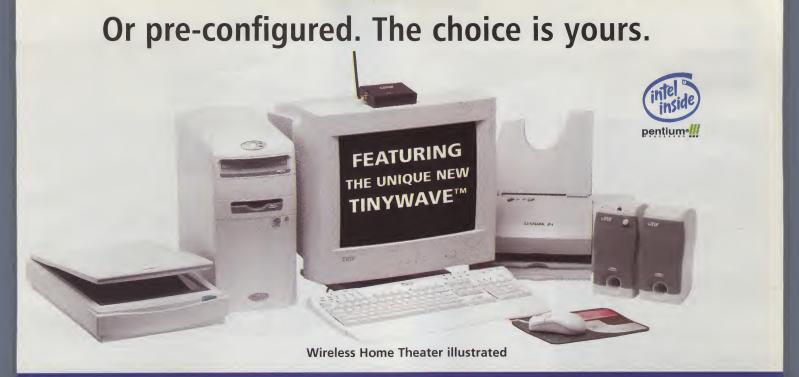
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HOT GEAR

pint-size PDA

Not since the debut of the Rex organizer have PDAs shrunk to the surprising size of the new \$59.99 Vista from Royal. This ittybitty card-size device features address, calculator, schedule, and expense-management software, and accepts data input with its built-in EZTouch keys. If you find the Vista's keys too small, plug in the included pocket-size detachable keyboard. The device syncs with popular PIMs and ships with a folding wallet-style case that does double duty as a business-card holder.

Royal Computer Business Products Bridgewater, NJ; 908-429-4357 www.royal.com

the new sound -----

Bursting on the scene as the first Secured Digital-compatible player available, the \$499.99 Toshiba MEA110 supports Matsushita's new Secured Digital (SD) memory-card technology. The sleek 2.7-ounce MEA110 player packs 64MB of internal memory, which holds about an hour of CD-quality music, and has a slot that accepts an SD memory card for up to 64MB of additional storage. The player connects to your PC over USB and ships with a cable. music-management software, and stereo headphones.

Toshiba MEA110

Toshiba America Consumer Products Wayne, NJ; 800-631-3811 www.toshiba.com/tacp

it's in the bag

Geeks need not be fashion nerds. Instead, carry your notebook computer and all your other gizmos around in style with the new \$59.99 Crypto Laptop Case, a slim shoulder bag with plenty of attitude. It's available in four eye-catching colors including the very cool silver. The padded nylon case measures a compact 13x11x5 inches and features utility hooks, document flaps on the front and back, and a cushioned interior, It also offers a business-card holder, an internal zippered pocket, and two front pockets for a cell phone and handheld organizer.

Crypto Laptop Case www.bolt.com







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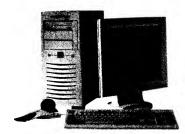


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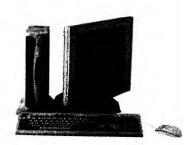
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- Integrated Intel® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
- MS® Windows® 98 & MS® Works Suite 2000 and Norton® AntiVirus™ 2000
- 3-Yr Ltd. Warranty²; 1-Yr NBD On-site Service³

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BUSINESS LEASE: \$25/MO., 48 MOS."

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- 48X CD-ROM
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- MS® Windows® 2000 Professional
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- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service³



BUSINESS LEASE: \$41/MO., 48 MOS."

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\$1299 © E-VALUE CODE 05874-890912

BUSINESS LEASE: \$36/MO., 48 MOS.11 ■ 3-Yr NBD On-site Service³, add \$149

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BUSINESS LEASE: \$55/MO., 48 MOS.

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- Up to 180GB Hot-swappable Internal Storage Capacity
- Integrated NIC/SCSI Controllers; 24X Max CD-ROM
- Dell™ OpenManage™ Server Management Solutions
- 3-Yr NBD On-site Service³; 7x24 Phone Support

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BUSINESS LEASE: \$81/MO., 48 MOS."

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Compag Armada M300

Heavyweight notebook performance in a lightweight package

This ultraslim notebook weighs only 3.4 pounds and features a fast 600MHz Pentium III processor, a 12GB hard drive, and built-in Ethernet support. The optional docking station, meanwhile, adds a CD-ROM, LS-120, or DVD-ROM drive; a second battery; audio-in and -out jacks; and more. For business travelers with tired backs and heavy workloads, the Armada M300 can't be beat. (See feature on p. 130.)

Compaq Computer Corp. • www.compaq.com • 800-888-9909

Creative Nomad II MG

The best way to listen to MP3s on the move

Like the original Nomad, the magnesium-encased Nomad II MG packs 64MB of memory, an FM radio tuner, and a voice recorder into a delightfully tiny form factor. But this new \$399 unit also features a USB docking cradle, 32 FM station presets, and a radio-record function. Plus, it can be upgraded to support future audio formats.

(See review on p. 119.)



Creative Technology • www.nomadworld.com • 800-998-5227

Dell Inspiron 5000e

A desktop-replacement system with all the comforts of home

With its stunning 1,400x1,050-resolution, 15-inch screen, Dell's new Inspiron is a DVD movie lover's dream. A fully loaded desktop-replacement system with a 750MHz Pentium III, 128MB of SDRAM, a whopping 30GB hard drive, and more, the Inspiron 5000e delivered some of the best benchmark scores we've ever seen. (See review on p. 114.)

Dell Computer Corp. • www.dell.com • 800-917-3355

DESKTOPS

Dell Dimension 4100

A midprice home PC with superior performance

With Intel's new 815E chip set under its hood—alongside an 800MHz Pentium III processor and 128MB of 133MHz SDRAM—Dell's \$1,839 Dimension 4100 represents an excellent balance between price and performance. Factor in the Dimension's abundant expansion capabilities and Dell's time-proven service and support, and you've got a real

(See review on p. 96.)

Dell Computer Corp. • www.dell.com • 800-388-8542

RECENT WINNERS

DESKTOPS

(August) The \$1,299 price of the Performance 3 connotes value, but the inclusion of a GeForce 256-based graphics card, 20.5GB hard drive, and three-piece Altec Lansing speaker system makes it clear this 667MHz Pentium III desktop is not your

typical budget system.

ABS Computer Technologies www.buyabs.com • 800-876-8088

MOBILE

Compaq Notebook 100

(September) A low-cost laptop with surprisingly few compromises, the \$1,299 Note book 100 comes standard with a 475MHz AMD K6-2 processor, 64MB of RAM, a 12.1-inch active-matrix screen, and a 5GB hard drive.

Compaq Computer Corp. www.compaq.com • 800-345-1518

micronpc.com TransPort ZX
(August) This 700MHz Pentium III portable speed demon delivers blazing performance, no-nonsense components, and outstanding



Dell Dimension 4100

battery life, all for \$2,999 direct. micronpc.com • micronpc.com 888-224-4247

(August) A free service for PDAs, two-way pagers, and Net phones, Shadowpack helps you warehouse your personal information in ways that pay off in more personalized content and faster online shopping.

Shadowpack • www.shadowpack.com

800-432-6201

HARDWARE

Elsa Gladiac

(September) The \$329 Gladiac is second to none when it comes to offering the highest frame rates, resolution, and color depth possible for today's demanding 3D games.

Elsa • www.elsa.com • 800-272-3572



(September) The world's first flat-face, Invar shadow-mask CRT monitor is as easy on your eyes as it is on your wallet. Priced at about \$447, the 19-inch Hitachi CM771 gives you

outstanding sharpness and brightness as well as a refreshingly straightforward control set. Hitachi America • www.hitachidisplays.com

Lexmark Z52 Color Jetprinter (August) You can't ask much more from a color

inkjet printer than fast print speeds, beautifullooking output, and a thrifty approach to consumables. The Lexmark Z52 offers all of this, and its low \$179 price makes it a bargain as well. **Lexmark International • www.lexmark.com** 888-539-6275

(August) Nikon's newest Coolpix is not only one of the least expensive 3.3-megapixel cameras available, it's also one of the best. Its



Palm m100

A Palm for the masses

Palm's new low-cost device is so cool, it could tempt a Palm V user to downgrade. The \$149 Palm m100 has a super-slick design-complete with snap-on covers in trendy colors—and useful new applets, including Note Pad and a travel alarm clock. It has a smaller screen and a few less programs than higher-end Palms, but its rock-bottom price makes those complaints seem trivial.

(See review on p. 120.)

Palm • www.palm.com • 800-235-6325



HARDWARE

Maxtor DiamondMax 60

Outstanding value on a high-capacity drive

Faster is not always better. By limiting the rotational speed of its \$329 DiamondMax 60 to 5,400 rpm, Maxtor is able to produce a 60GB hard drive with the highest storage density and the lowest cost per gigabyte we've seen for a mass-market drive. (See review on p. 106.)

Maxtor Corp. • www.maxtor.com • 800-262-9867

Umax Astra 3400

See the light with this budget scanner.

Priced at \$99, this flatbed scanner boasts painless setup, straightforward operation, and fast scan speeds. It also bundles highly capable OCR and document-management software, and offers several automatic functions, including monochrome/color document detection and auto-rotating of skewed images. Affordable, fast, and easy to use, the Astra is a picture-perfect choice.

(See feature on p. 140.)

Umax Technologies • www.umax.com • 800-562-0311

Extensis Portfolio 5.0

Get your media files in order.

This powerful media organizer lets you easily categorize and locate files scattered over individual or networked hard drives. In addition to its impressive search and sort capabilities, Extensis Portfolio's features include Digimarc watermarking, the ability to add text annotations to graphics files, and support for distributed work environments. (See review on p. 122.)

Creativepro.com • www.extensis.com • 800-796-9798



Star Trek: Klingon Academy

THIS MONTH'S

Chumbo.com..

Hifi.com..

OfficeMax.

Onvia.com Outpost.com...

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Where no Star Trek game has gone before

For reviews of this month's winners, go to p. 180.

Crutchfield Corp.

Dell Computer Corp.

RECENT BEST SITE WINNERS

Computers4Sure.com

Arguably the best Star Trek game to date, Klingon Academy puts you in the shoes of a young cadet in the Klingon Defense Forces Elite Command Academy. Your goal is to captain a Klingon warship through the game's 25 captivating missions or in battles of your own design. Although it stretches out over five CDs, Klingon Academy deftly grabs top honors in the franchise. (See review on p. 128.)

Interplay • www.interplay.com 800-468-3775

Tachyon: The Fringe (September) NovaLogic's first space-combat sim is also one of the year's best with an intriguing story line, amazing 3D graphics and effects, slick ship controls, and terrific multiplayer games. Deep space has rarely been so inviting.

NovaLogic • www.novalogic.com
800-858-1322

WEB SERVICES

(August) In addition to giving you a full 50MB of cyber storage space to upload or share your PC files, this free service offers an added bonus: unlimited online storage for any content found on the Web Your hard drive will love you for it. i-drive.com • idrive.com • 415-356-2280





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No Requiem for Moore's Law

Will technology keep extending processor capacity and bandwidth? Does it even matter? Yes, yes, and yes.

HESE DAYS, COMPUTERS RUN SO FAST THAT WORRIES OVER computational limits pale before concerns about sufficient bandwidth to deliver advanced Web services. Still, chip designers have not been able to guarantee continuous advances much beyond 2010, when integrated circuits will approach fundamental limits.

Three issues will constrain next-generation (and beyond) computing and communications: the CPU and related components, bandwidth to link individual PCs

and intelligent devices, and the applications computers can deliver.

It would be premature to speculate about all this—except that advances just announced suggest that processor and bandwidth limits will not constrain progress for at least 20 years. This raises provocative questions about what we'll do with all those MIPS.

FASTER PROCESSORS, BIGGER PIPES

For 36 years, Moore's Law has accurately

predicted a doubling of transistor density every 12 to 24 months in integrated circuits. Intel's latest processor, the Pentium 4, delivers 1.5GHz with 42 million transistors—enough horse-power to drive streaming video on the Web, real-time video encoding, 3D visualization, speech recognition, and voice over IP. Clearly, today's high-end processors are capable of handling sophisticated computational tasks.

On the cable side, the issue is more about deployment than technology,

because fiber-optic cables and routers can move truly stunning amounts of data. The optical advantage stems from the fact that photons are without mass, unlike electrons. With optical cable, there's no set limit to the number of photons you can cram into a particular fiber, while only a certain number of electrons can use a single circuit.

In fact, one bottleneck for optical communications at present is that the fibers pass through standard electronic processors for amplification and switching. Had those circuits been optically based, communications today would face even fewer constraints.

Optical fiber handles vast amounts of data by multiplexing several wavelengths of light into a single fiber. On the backbone side, providers this year expect to install fibers able to deliver 40Gbps per wavelength, or the equivalent of 750 complete channels of streaming video. Each fiber can handle eight or more wavelengths, and cables hold 100 or more fibers per cable. In



round numbers, trans-Atlantic-type cables deployed in the near future will be able to transmit the equivalent of nearly 1 million simultaneous television channels. Routers and switches being deployed can handle a similar load.

It's where the backbones step down to individuals that bottlenecks occur. At present, many Web users have no choice but to employ analog phone lines. Over the next few years, DSL, cable, and satellite providers

will boost the bandwidth for home users by a factor of 10. In the long term, communications bandwidth will be a function of economics, not technology.

On the CPU side, road maps from chip makers suggest that by 2010 we'll see at least 10GHz CPUs, with circuit widths as low as 0.05 micron. Many designers believe that delivered computer power will be 100 times that of today's 1GHz CPUs—not the mere tenfold increase implied by the clock-speed advances alone—because of greater parallelism and more sophisticated processor architecture.

With such hardware, we'll see widespread use of virtual personalities in all kinds of man-machine interfaces, such as virtual travel agents or training instructors.

However, a recent breakthrough just announced by IBM pushes projections for circuit widths to 0.01 micron (10 nanometers) and below. The advance, known as V-Groove, allows circuits to be etched in a V-shape, reducing electrical crosstalk. Even without the help of optical, molecular, or atomic computing, that takes us beyond common-sense projections and into a realm in which computer power is sufficient to tangle with issues such as which capabilities are uniquely human.

MAN OR MACHINE?

After deploying the full range of multimedia, we'll move to continuous speech recognition and real-time translation, plus Weblinked e-paper and advanced medical diagnostics. These advances will only get us to

2010. Since we can now project beyond the year 2020, we expect by then CPUs of 100GHz or faster, with terabytes per second delivered to the home.

That's when we'll see machine capabilities begin to overlap human ones. By 2020, computer and communications technology will be embedded everywhere, not just in toasters and televisions, but also in floors, sidewalks, and roads. And these entities will be constantly con-

nected to the Web. Computer-aided devices will provide sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; artificial personalities will participate in nearly all routine activities, such as travel reservations, shopping, and information seeking. Eventually, computer technology may be implanted in humans, for the ultimate "always-on" experience.

In short, the next couple of decades are likely to be the start of a wild ride. Want to come?

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Phone System Of the Future

A transceiver on your rooftop may soon bring you free local phone service.

T WAS DURING A CONVERSATION WITH BRITISH TELECOM'S CHIEF technologist, Peter Cochrane, that I learned of an interesting plan: Make all local calls free and make the phone like a TV set—something you buy once and use for free as often as you like. The technology I'm about to describe is not unknown. Variations exist in both Japan's Personal Handy Phone System and the Metricom Ricochet Internet radio modem send-and-receive system, whose numerous little send/receive boxes placed hither and you move data and call traffic from point A to point B.

This new scheme is somewhat different. The Personal Handy Phone System, a variation on cellular technology, uses lowpower mini-cells placed on telephone poles to link cell phones to the central office. A wire from the central office sends the signal from the mini-cell back to the central office, where it's routed to its destination. Cochrane's rooftop system is more interesting. These low-power boxes link standard phones rather than cell phones within a home or office (although I can envision variations that include cell-like features).

Cochrane describes it this way: A retailer-Wal-Mart, for instance-has a huge fiber link to a central store. It sells you a transceiver, which you put on the roof like a satellite dish. The unit hooks up all the phones in your home and sends the traffic by radio to the Wal-Mart receiver, which sends it to a switching router, into the fiber and off to some central office. A call costs next to nothing.

For this scheme to work the system must roll out as a radiant. In other words, nearby houses buy the first line of transceivers, then the next group farther away buys the next line. The transceivers between the store and the second wave of buyers act as repeaters to forward the data to the store. So the devices are multifunctional, acting as both transceivers and repeaters for other transceivers.

As long as you keep shopping at Wal-

Mart, the phone link remains free. A shopping card would keep tabs on your buying habits. This works for other large retailers such as Costco, as well. As long as you're a Costco member, you get to use this free phone link—an interesting way to keep customers loyal. System maintenance becomes a marketing expense.

Two things make this work: the scads of available fiber out there, much of it coming in and out of corporations, and IP switching. Most telephony observers contend phone calls will eventually be free, and this rooftop transceiver system, with its Web-like

architecture, is an obvious way to reduce telephony infrastructure costs. Cochrane reckons the system would sell for about \$300 and come with perhaps a year of free phone service. After that you'd continue getting free service as part of various customerloyalty programs.

The most interesting aspect of this idea is that it changes the business model for localloop phone service. Everyone wants to get into long distance because it's the most profitable part of commercial telephony. Although the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was designed to make phone services more competitive, it just made long-distance services a bit more competitive. Nothing's been done to make local phone service competitive, no matter what the promises. Most people around the country have one choice unless they go to cellular. A network of rooftop transceivers changes this model rapidly.

SWITCHING SERVICE SHOULD BE SIMPLE

Right now, at least two rooftop systems are in the planning stages. Nokia has bought one of the technologies, Siemens the other. Plus, it's rumored a lot of venture money is going into other schemes. This technology will benefit from a single standard, so more than one vendor can support the transceivers. Say you're receiving service from Wal-Mart and find you can't sustain the minimum required purchases to keep the system free. It would be nice to switch to another service provider without having to swap out equipment.

With microelectronics becoming so inexpensive (as governed by Moore's law), this kind of scheme is quite plausible. Phone companies would feel the impact, but they could also be the service providers if they sold the transceivers and some premium services for a flat monthly fee.

> From a marketing perspective, this is similar to television. You can watch broadcast television for free, but the services, reception, and extra channels you get from cable and satellite make them worth the money. The phone companies should look at this analogy closely. They can charge a monthly fee for service, in addition to the \$300.

There's some irony in how cable companies have been trying to think like phone companies with no success. Here's where phone companies can think like cable companies and do very well for themselves. dvorak@dvorak.org





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The Sale Is Over

Without price as a draw, e-tailers are incorporating the strengths of offline retailers.

NLINE SHOPPING'S EXTENDED GRAND-OPENING SALE IS over. Since the first-quarter stock-market correction, dot-com companies have been succumbing to cash constraints. Among the casualties are online toy stores toysmart.com and ToyTime.com. In addition, Hollywood Entertainment recently announced it could no longer sustain Reel.com's e-commerce infrastructure and would turn fulfillment responsibilities over to buy.com. And at press time, Oxygen Media announced it would close two

shopping sites targeted to women, and iVillage was in talks to sell its iBaby shopping site to Babygear.

For shoppers, this has meant steadily rising prices at e-tailers weathering the shake-out. Even more noticeable for veteran online shoppers has been the absence of onceplentiful coupons and loss-leading deals. "I'm going to miss buying DVDs subsidized by VC [venture capital] money," read a posting on the *alt.video.dvd* newsgroup the week Reel.com closed its e-commerce operations. "Alas, it was good while it lasted."

THE ONLINE-OFFLINE CONNECTION

If price is no longer a draw, online shoppers will gravitate toward sites that offer other benefits, such as customer service and convenience. Many sites are using offline tactics to drive this point home for the holiday season.

Some sites are even offering print catalogs, a move frowned on as a tool of "legacy" mailorder houses by Internet purists a couple of years ago. But just as catalog vendors have successfully used online stores to attract shoppers, so-called "pure" Internet plays have begun recruiting seasoned executives from the catalog business to create catalogs of their own.

Catalogs offer the advantage of a long shelf life. Vendors often see sales spikes for more than a month after mailing, compared with 48 hours to a week with targeted e-mail campaigns. I've found myself browsing catalogs from companies like Eddie Bauer, Crate & Barrel, and Mrs. Fields, only to go to the Web site to place the order.

Contrary to earlier concerns, the Web has

helped rather than hurt these businesses. This holiday season, I'm looking forward to getting the same convenience from e-tailers. I already receive circulars in my newspaper from Amazon.com. Around Father's Day, I received my first true catalog from an e-tailer—RedEnvelope, a seller of upscale private-label gifts. Food.com (restaurant takeout) and eZiba.com (handmade goods) are following suit. For the consumer, catalogs offer much better browsability than Web sites,



and they offer glossy product shots without the download lag time.

RedEnvelope—along with Victoria's Secret, macys.com, J.C. Penney, and Lands' End—provides a prominent sign-up form where visitors can register to receive a catalog. Think of this as "offline opt-in."

Private-label goods are another catalog specialty e-tailers are picking up on. E-tailers that sell other brands are now offering their

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own (often lower-priced) lines, the same way department stores offer their own lines of clothing. Ashford.com, for instance, recently rolled out its own collection of jewelry; Chipshot.com has its own golf clubs; and eToys will have its own line of children's furniture in the fall.

SERVICE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Customer service is another offline strength e-tailers are beginning to incorporate. Barnesandnoble.com recently joined other "bricks-and-clicks" sites, including macys.com, Wal-Mart, Borders.com, and TowerRecords.com, in allowing shoppers to bring returns to the nearest retail location. The site has also expanded its same-day delivery service in Manhattan and—at least in my anecdotal experience—is delivering quickly.

It remains unclear whether such practices will force bricks-and-clicks sites to charge sales tax in all states in which they have retail stores, but recent Jupiter Communications research shows online shoppers don't mind paying the extra fee for items under \$100.

Other customer-service gems include TowerRecords.com's policy of sending you a free jewel case if the one you receive is cracked. And Lands' End has long offered its "call-back" service, in which a representative calls once you submit your number online.

Not that integration between online and offline is always smooth. You still can't use your offline coupons on macys.com, for instance, and many online stores still don't tell you if something's out of stock until after you've placed your order.

THE BIG MONEY

Research analysts are urging pure-play e-tailers to partner with offline companies because of the benefits consumers eive in using both channels. Juniter's data

nies because of the benefits consumers perceive in using both channels. Jupiter's data indicates that for every dollar spent online, shoppers spend \$7 offline as a direct result of the research they do on the Internet. Knowledge like this will force e-tailers to devise new ways to reach online shoppers when they're ready to buy. And that will require a new focus on service. Alas, bargain hunters, the sale may be over, but the mall is still open.

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Where Are All Pads?

Cost, capability, and market requirements have kept browser-focused tablet computers out of users' hands.

ORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO, VARIOUS COMPANIES BEGAN demonstrating prototypes of Web pads—tablet computers dedicated to Web browsing. With a wireless link to a base station, which in turn connects to a phone line or home network, a Web pad provides Internet access with none of the complexity of a personal computer. Plus, you can use it anywhere in the house, putting the Web where the people are, instead of where the computer is.

The Web-pad concept resonated with many people. It could make Web access as convenient as reading a newspaper, consulting a phone directory, or watching TV. Yet even though prototypes have been around for years, Web pads remain essentially unavailable. Three major issues have delayed them: cost, capability, and market requirements.

The most expensive component in a Web pad is the screen. Unfortunately, liquid-crystal displays (LCDs) are in very short supply. Given their limited manufacturing capacities, LCD makers prefer to sell larger, more expensive displays for notebook computers and desktop monitors. With demand for these products outstripping supply, there's little incentive to price smaller displays aggressively.

The supply constraint is due, in part, to the Asian financial crisis, which prompted most manufacturers to delay plans for new manufacturing plants. Many new plants are now finally under construction, but it takes years—and billions of dollars—for a new plant to begin production. The supply/demand imbalance isn't likely to get dramatically better this year, but in 2001 the situation could turn around.

Along with high costs, delivering a high-quality Web experience has proven surprisingly difficult. At first, it seemed Web standards such as HTML provided a new definition of compatibility that eliminated the need for Windows software or x86 processors in Web appliances. But the ever-changing browser plug-ins and evolving Web standards have made it tough to create browsers for Web pads that deliver a PC-quality browsing experience. The list of widely used plug-ins is surprisingly long, from streaming audio and video (RealAudio and Windows Media Player) to layout and graphics (Flash and PDF). If the browser isn't Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator, the operating system isn't Windows (or perhaps Macintosh), and the processor isn't x86 (or perhaps PowerPC), you need special versions of each plug-in.

Suppliers of these plug-ins have their hands full keeping up with the rapid pace of PC-centric Internet software, and because the installed base of Web appliances is tiny, there's little imme-

diate incentive to invest in supporting them. And because the various appliance vendors are pursuing a range of technology strategies, there's no single Web-pad standard for plug-in suppliers to target. Furthermore, most plug-ins are written assuming lots of memory and a disk, which makes it hard to port them to the limited-memory world of the Web pad.

If the target market is those without computers who are looking to Web pads as an easy on-ramp to the Internet, it may be acceptable to forgo support for many plugins. This is the case with most Internet appliances so far, including Netpliance's i-opener and Microsoft's WebTV.

The problem is Web pads aren't cheap, and the most likely early market is not Internet neophytes but active Web users who've had PCs for years and like the idea of having an additional Web-access device at home. These users will demand a Web pad that delivers the same quality Web experience as their PCs.

WEB ACCESS ISN'T ENOUGH

Some prospective Web-pad marketers are concerned that even full-featured Web access isn't enough to get many people to buy a Web pad. These companies are working with partners to develop additional services that make Web pads more useful outside the home office. They're also seeking partners to subsidize the cost of the device by offering preset bookmarks and other forms of advertising.

Many early Web-pad developers have switched from RISC to x86 processors in order to gain easier access to plug-ins, and Transmeta has pitched its low-power x86 processor as an ideal solution for this market. Simply being x86-compatible doesn't solve the problem, though; the full set of plug-ins

is available only for the Windows environment. Microsoft hopes to use this advantage to make the new Windows CE 3.0—for which a full IE 4 browser is available—the operating system of choice for Web pads.

All these factors combined mean you won't see a flood of Web pads this year. Some will ship this year, and if all goes well, many more will ship next year; then the flood could begin in 2002. Eventually, Web pads will be a major part of the computing landscape, but it's going to take a frustratingly long time.

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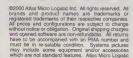
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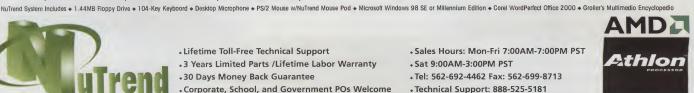
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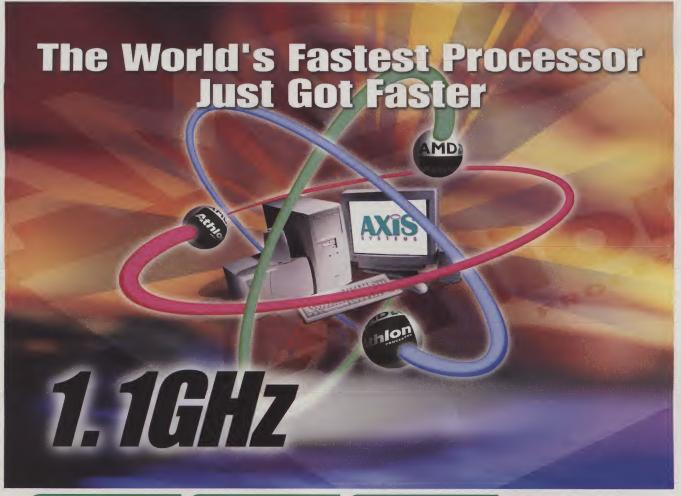








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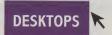
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SONY VAIO PCV-J100

Moviemaking Moves to the PC

F YOU BELIEVE THE MISSIVES FROM COMPUTER MANUFACTURERS, the filmmakers of tomorrow are cutting their teeth today on digital video for their PCs. Apple Computer has spent millions on ads designed to educate consumers about the joys of computer-aided video creation, and vendors are scrambling to adapt the concept to Windows-based machines. Among these, the Sony VAIO PCV-J100 is one of the least expensive and better-equipped systems for desktop video production. In addition to having the horsepower and software needed for video editing, the PCV-J100 has two IEEE 1394 (FireWire) ports for direct connections to digital camcorders.

As is typical for sub-\$1,000 systems, the PCV-J100's \$899-estimated price doesn't include

a monitor. Our evaluation system came with a \$229-estimated, 15-inch Sony HMD-A100/L monitor, which brought the total cost up to \$1,128. Because a computer at this price can't use all top-shelf components, we were interested in how Sony tailored its choices for the target audience of consumers interested in plugand-play video production.

The PCV-J100's 600MHz Celeron CPU and 64MB of SDRAM proved

capable of handling the rigors of juggling multiple video clips simultaneously. Sony's choice of a 15GB hard drive is a bit disappointing, however. Though it should provide more-than-adequate storage for a general-purpose home computer, the drive may be undersized for some video projects.

The PCV-J100's best features are its two IEEE 1394 ports (called i.Link ports by Sony) and a generous selection of videocreation and video-editing programs. Having two IEEE 1394 ports makes it much easier to perform real-time editing with two different camcorders. You can also send video from one camcorder to another without having to copy the video to your hard drive first. The PCV-J100's bundled software includes Sony's MovieShaker, a simple video-editing program that automatically



adds transitions, effects, and music according to a selected theme (such as "romantic" or "exciting"). Sony's DVgate, meanwhile, allows you to stream video between IEEE 1394-connected devices, and Adaptec's Easy CD Creator lets you archive your videos to a CD-R or CD-RW disc using the system's 8x/4x/32x CD-RW drive. The PCV-J100 also packs a 10/100Mbps Ethernet card and a V.90 modem.

So where did Sony cut costs to optimize this budget-priced system? In place of a dedicated graphics card, the PCV-J100 uses the Intel 810 chip set. For video editing as well as most typical applications, the graphics engine is sufficient. In fact, although a Business Winstone 99 score of 17.7 showed the PCV-J100 to be somewhat sluggish for a system with a 600MHz processor, the PC is

still plenty powerful for most day-to-day tasks, such as word processing and Web surfing. If you plan to use the PCV-J100 as a family gaming system, however, you may be disappointed. We were unable to complete our 3D WinMark 2000 benchmark, which is designed to test the limits of a 3D-graphics engine. Still, when we tried several popular games, such as Quake III, The Sims, and

> FreeSpace 2, they all ran without a hitch—albeit considerably slower than would be typi-

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AS TESTED: 600MHz

Inexpensive; two IEEE 1394

ports; easy-to-use video-

cal for a system with a better 3D card. In addition, the PCV-J100's lack of an AGP slot limits your upgrade options to PCI-based

graphics cards.

Instead of integrating a sound chip onto the motherboard, as is common with budget systems, the PCV-J100's audio is generated entirely through software emulation. Regretfully, this solution, paired with the two small Sony speakers, produced substandard sound quality. We wouldn't recommend this system if you plan to use it primarily for producing music videos.

No stranger to innovative product designs, Sony gives the PCV-J100 a stylish, high-tech look, with steel gray and metallic blue colors. The compact 12x6.7x14.4-inch (HWD) minitower case includes a hidden panel for the CD-RW drive, which opens and closes along with the drive tray. Inside the case, you'll find one of the four PCI slots still vacant and one empty internal 3.5-inch drive bay. The PCV-J100 comes with a one-year parts-and-labor warranty.

If you're looking for a home system that's capable of running the latest 3D games, you'd be better off considering a different (albeit probably more expensive) system. But if what you need is a relatively inexpensive way to get started with digital video production, the VAIO PCV-J100 should make your final cut. -David English



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DESKTOPS K

DELL DIMENSION 4100

Computing in the Right Dimension

Best Buy October 2000

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE OF PERFORMANCE AND PRICE in a multipurpose home PC can be a tricky endeavor for a system manufacturer. By basing its 800MHz Pentium III-equipped Dimension 4100 system on Intel's new 815E chip set, however, Dell Computer Corp. manages to

combine great performance, solid components, sufficient expansion capacity, and the company's always-impressive array of support services in a moderately priced desktop system, selling for \$1,839 direct.

The 815E chip set is similar in functionality to its higher-end cousin, the 820E. It supports a number of technologies relatively new to desktop systems, such as a 133MHz front-side bus,

the Ultra ATA/100 drive interface, and 4x AGP graphics. One significant difference between the 815E and 820E is that the 820E is designed to work with RDRAM-based systems, while the 815E is geared for systems that use SDRAM. While RDRAM provides a modest performance boost over SDRAM, systems using the comparatively inexpensive SDRAM cost a lot less. The Dimension 4100 comes with 128MB of 133MHz SDRAM. Another difference between the 820E and 815E is that the 815E

includes an integrated graphics accelerator, a factor that also has the potential to help hold down the cost of 815E-based systems. But the Dimension 4100 doesn't utilize the 815E's built-in graphics engine, shipping instead with an nVidia GeForce2 GTS-based graphics card with 32MB of DDR memory.

Though this graphics card kicks up the cost of the Dimension 4100 a few notches, it pays off mightily with excellent 3D graphics performance. The system's 3D WinMark 2000 scores of 171 and 133, at 800x600 and 1,024x768, respectively, represent some of the fastest 3D-graphics performance we've seen to date. In fact, the Dimension 4100's 3D performance is rivaled only by another GeForce2 GTS-based system: the Quantex SM933z, a much more expensive system, running a 933MHz Pentium III with an 820



chip set and 128MB of RDRAM. (See the September review "Computing With Class," p. 106.) The Dimension 4100 also puts out strong hard-drive and 2D-graphics performance, both of which contribute toward an impressive Business Winstone 99 score of 32.

The minitower case opens easily with a single thumbscrew and two squeeze tabs. Inside, you'll find three of the five PCI slots empty, as well as four vacant drive bays: one 3.5-inch internal bay, two front-accessible 3.5-inch bays, and one 5.25-inch front-accessible bay. We'd recommend populating the 5.25-inch bay with a CD-RW drive, which would add \$199 to the system price.

The Dimension 4100 uses InterVideo's WinDVD software decoder/player for DVD playback. DVD movies appear particularly sharp, with no posterization or

time lags. The 17inch Dell P780 monitor uses a Trinitron tube and provides a sharp, bright image. The audio subsystem consists of a threepiece Altec Lansing ACS340 speaker system and a Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live Value sound card. We found this combination great for listening to audio CDs and watching movies. Still, users looking to immerse

> themselves in sound would do well to spend the extra \$60 to upgrade to the Harman Kardon

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Minimal software bundle

SYSTEM: Dell Dimension 4100

COMPANY: Dell Computer Corp.

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HK595 speaker system, which gives you an extra pair of satellite speakers for the rear channel.

The software bundle includes Windows 98 Second Edition, Microsoft Works Suite 2000, and MusicMatch Jukebox 4.30. No games or DVD movies are included, so you can't immediately see the superb 3D-graphics or DVD-playback performance of which this system is capable.

Dell's 24-hour, live, toll-free technical support and outstanding Web-based support resources are at

your disposal. The three-year warranty with one year of next-business-day onsite support can be extended to include three years of total onsite coverage for an additional \$99. The support section of Dell's Web site uses your system's service-tag number to provide relevant support information quickly. You can also use the Ask Dudley wizard for help with technical questions. To add to your system, Dell's Gigabuys online store lets you choose from a wide range of accessories and upgrade options.

With the new 815E chip set under its hood, the Dimension 4100 is a paradigm-shifter. Now you can buy a reasonably priced home system that can run demanding 3D graphics and other applications at levels comparable to systems that cost much more.

—Bruce Brown



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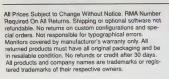
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CYBERPOWER ATHLON SPECIAL

An Athlon for All Occasions

OST PEOPLE RELY ON THEIR COMPUTERS TO DO FAR MORE than simply crunch numbers. For many of us, computers are an important means of communication and a source of entertainment. To that end, CyberPower's Athlon Special systems are designed with such flexibility in mind. We looked at a configuration based on an 800MHz AMD Athlon CPU and 256MB of 133MHz SDRAM, selling for \$1,849 direct.

At the heart of the system is an ATI Rage Fury Pro graphics card with 32MB of onboard memory and video-in and -out capabilities. Although you'd probably never want to send the display of a business application, such as a word processor, out to a

television (the image quality would be too poor), you could use the system's composite or S-Video output to watch a DVD movie or play a game on your big-screen TV. Not that there's anything wrong with the ViewSonic E790 monitor-its 18inch viewing area, tight 0.22mm dot pitch, and sharp images make it a fine display. But when it comes to entertainment,

bigger is always better—and if your television qualifies, the system's Rage Fury Pro allows you to take advantage of it.

Chances are you'll also be using your system to listen to music CDs and other audio applications. The Athlon Special assigns this task to a Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live Value card and an Altec Lansing ACS54 speaker system. Altec calls this five-piece speaker system the "PowerPlay Plus for Gamers," and it does a very capable job with game sounds. It's also pretty good with both movie sound-tracks and music. We noticed, however, that the bass got a little muddy at higher volumes. But just cranking it down a bit solved the problem, and it was still loud enough to fill an average-size room.

CyberPower also packs an 8x/4x/32x



Creative Labs CD-RW drive into the system. It's ideal for creating custom audio CDs, and when combined with the 16x Pioneer DVD drive, you'll do a lot less disc swapping. For the more practical-minded, you can also use the CD-RW for offline storage or even to back up your hard drive. CyberPower passed up the usual Adaptec Easy CD software in favor of Nero Burning ROM. The Adaptec software is easier to use, but Nero is more comprehensive when it comes to making full backups.

Once you're done gaming, watching movies, or creating and playing audio CDs, you might feel compelled to get some work done. The system scored a 28.8 on Business Winstone 99, which is right on target for an 800MHz Athlon-

based computer, and more than fast enough for just about any mainstream business app you throw its way. In addition, the 34GB IBM hard drive provides plenty of room for a vast MP3 library, a dozen or so games, and a cartload of programs. The drive achieved a score of 7,200 on Business Disk WinMark 99. showing it to be one of the swiftest drives

we've seen.

Perhaps the only significant fault with the system is its ATI graphics Disappointing performance Disappointing 3D CyberPower Athlon Special COMPANY: CyberPower Baldwin Park, CA; 800-707-0393 www.cyberpowerinc.com AS TESTED: 800MHz AMD Athlon; 256MB 133MHz SDRAM; 34GB hard drive; 16x DVD-ROM drive; 8x/4x/32x CD-RW drive; ATI Rage Fury Pro graphics card with 32MB SDRAM; 19-inch ViewSonic E790 monitor; Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live Value sound card: five-piece Altec Lansing ACS54 speaker system; 56Kbps voice modem; Utobia Remote Eyes Internet Camera Corel WordPerfect Office 2000: additional software

 $\star\star\star\star$

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multimedia components

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drive performance: excellent

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engine. While powerful enough for 2D apps, it can't compete with the likes of the nVidia GeForce family of graphics accelerators. Upgrading to a GeForce2 GTS-based graphics card will cost you an additional \$159, and it would also mean you'd have to give up the video-in and -out ports.

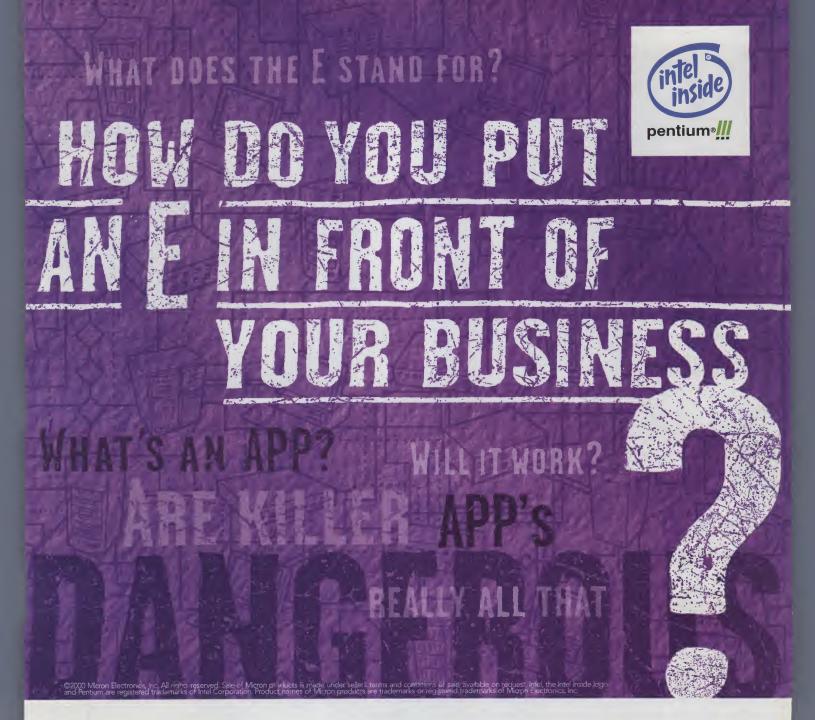
If you have occasion to open the 21x7.5x17-inch midtower case, you'll need to exercise some care. An exhaust fan is attached to the side panel with only about 18 inches of wire tracing back to the power supply. Two 5.25-inch and

one 3.5-inch accessible drive bays remain vacant. Also, three of five PCI slots and a PCI/ISA shared slot are available for expansion.

CyberPower provides 24/7 customer support and backs the Athlon Special with a three-year parts-and-labor warranty with one year of onsite support. You can upgrade to two years of onsite coverage for \$59, or three years for \$99.

For under \$1,850, CyberPower has assembled a powerful multipurpose system that should easily exceed the needs of all but the most demanding users. And because all of CyberPower's systems are customizable, even hard-to-please consumers should be able to configure a system to their demanding specifications.

—Bill O'Brien



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17", .27mm Dot Pitch Monitor (16" viewable)

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EPSON STYLUS COLOR 670

HARDWARE

Photo Printing at A Pretty Price

ERHAPS THE ONLY OBSTACLE PREVENTING THE digital-photography revolution from taking on global proportions is that the equipment can be relatively expensive. But if Epson America's new Stylus Color 670 inkjet printer is any indication, conventional film processing may finally go the way of the dinosaur.

Despite its budget-friendly estimated price of \$89, the 670 produces highquality photos at resolutions up to 1,440x720 dpi that look at least as good as those from your corner one-hour photo processor. The 670 also adroitly handles your letter and legal-size printing chores, creating documents you'd have a hard time telling apart from those produced with more expensive inkjet printers. (Nevertheless, higher-end photo printers will still buy you even more image detail, better flesh tones, faster print times, and longer-lasting prints.)

Our 7.5x6-inch test photo printed in less than 3 minutes; a full-page 8.5x11-

inch print should take less than 5 minutes. Our one-page letter took 40 seconds to print, and the 11-page text document took about 6.5 minutes to print. We measured the text print speed at under 2 pages per minute (ppm), less than half the claimed 5-ppm rate at the printer's default mode. Opting for highquality mode further reduces the output speed with little visible impact on quality, but a tremendous drain on the ink cartridges.

The printer uses a black cartridge and a three-color cartridge; replacements cost about \$24.95 and \$29.95 each, respectively. The ink cost might seem high, but the actual per-page

> consumable costs are rather reasonable: 6 cents per page for

monochrome printing and \$1.15 for a fullpage color photo. (Prices include paper.) The unit comes with both parallel- and USB-port interfaces and works with both PCs and Macs.

This unit should easily satisfy the printing demands of most homes, and it doesn't represent a huge initial investment, nor is it expensive to maintain. -Winn L. Rosch

At press time, Computer Shopper learned that Epson will cease production of the Stylus Color 670 in favor of a new line of color inkjet printers coming out in the October time frame. However, the Stylus Color 670 should be available in the retail channel for a few more months.





FUJIFILM FINEPIX 4700 ZOOM

Playing the Pixel Numbers Game

ESPITE FUJI PHOTO FILM U.S.A.'S CLAIM THAT ITS \$799-estimated FinePix 4700 Zoom digital camera produces 4.3-megapixel images, it makes more sense to think of it as a 2.4-megapixel camera with a superior dynamic range.

The FinePix uses Fuji's new Super CCD, which employs 2.4 million octagonally shaped sensors and filters, rather than the traditional rectangular sensors used in the CCDs of most other digital cameras.

In theory, these octagonal sensors create a larger active sensor area with increased light sensitivity. In our tests, the camera yielded bright, saturated images in daylight, and well-exposed indoor shots in low-light situations. For the most part, the FinePix renders cool but accurate color. Underexposed areas, however, have a tendency to shift to red.

Unfortunately, the FinePix's images don't achieve the level of sharpness

we've seen with the best 2-megapixel cameras—in part, because the FinePix doesn't capture uncompressed images. The camera supports three different compression levels, and resolutions of 640x480, 1,280x960, and a scaled-up 2,400x1,800. The resulting images display relatively poor detail resolution and visible artifacts in the shadow areas when viewed at actual size.

The FinePix comes with four AA-size, rechargeable NiMH batteries, a charger, a 16MB SmartMedia card (which holds

> between 8 and 45 imagesdepending on the compression level—or up to 80 seconds of video), and a USB cable. The camera has a 35mm-equivalent

zoom range of 38mm to 114mm, and its minimum macro-focus distance is 11 inches.

Rather than devoting specific buttons to zoom, flash control, resolution, compression, and playback, the FinePix uses a small circular backlit LCD with buttons for these functions. Less commonly used functions are accessed through the menu system on the primary LCD.

We found the FinePix exceptionally easy to use overall, and a capable, though not outstanding, camera. For what is essentially a 2.4-megapixel camera, however, it is priced considerably higher than the competition. -Lori Grunin





 $\star\star\star\star$

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those from more expensive printers

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quality: easy installation

PRODUCT: Epson Stylus Color 670

COMPANY:

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Easy to use; good dynamic range and color reproduction No uncompressed output underexposed areas shift to red: images display poor detail resolution and artifacts in shadow

PRODUCT: Fujifilm FinePix 4700 Zoom COMPANY: Fuji Photo Film U.S.A. Elmsford, NY: 800-800-3854 www.fujifilm.com MFR. EST. PRICE: \$799 ZDNet Price It!" 3 3 8 3 1

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6000 P3	700 MHz	128MB RAM	12GB	Windows 95	F2087WT	\$3719
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DiamondMax 60 by this minuscule amount, Maxtor has increased storage capacity 50 percent over the drive's predecessor. With an

incredible estimated price of \$329, this new 60GB hard drive easily represents the lowest cost per gigabyte of any drive we've seen.

The key to this low price is the drive's modest 5,400-rpm spindle speed. The slow rotations enable the data to be packed tighter onto the drive's four aluminum platters. As a result, the drive yields the highest density of current mass-market drives-15.3GB per platter—for a total of 61,444,227,072 bytes.

Maxtor claims that the Diamond-Max 60's performance should be comparable to that of a true 7,200-rpm drive, and our testing confirms this.

Despite spinning 25 percent slower than Maxtor's speedy DiamondMax Plus 40 (a 7,200-rpm drive), the DiamondMax 60 lagged only about 11 percent behind it on our Business Disk WinMark 99 test and was approximately 8 percent slower on the High-End Disk WinMark 99. This means that while it may not be the fastest drive we've seen, the DiamondMax 60 should be more than fast enough for most mainstream applications.

As with all large-capacity drives, the DiamondMax 60 can be problematic in older PCs. Maxtor's MaxBlast installation utility includes a software BIOS that makes the

> drive's full capacity available in aging

systems. During setup, MaxBlast reported the wrong partition size, but it successfully created a correctly sized partition and made an exact copy of an existing boot drive. More experienced users can set up the DiamondMax 60 using Windows' FDISK utility, because the drive's capacity is just shy of FDISK's 64GB rollover limit.

make the DiamondMax 60 an excellent, quick upgrade if you need to drastically expand your storage capacity. Indeed, you'd be hard-pressed to buy your gigs for less. -Winn L. Rosch



BOSTON ACOUSTICS BA4800

Hearing Is as Good as Believing

OVIEGOERS HAVE COME TO EXPECT THE SOUNDS of planes, trains, and automobiles whooshing by from one side of the theater to the other. But hearing this same realistic 3D positional audio while playing games or while

watching DVD movies on your home computer is something most of us have never experienced. Boston Acoustics hopes to change all that with its \$199.95-estimated BA4800 five-speaker audio system.

To enjoy the full capabilities of the BA4800, you'll need a fourchannel sound card. We tested this powerhouse of a speaker system with an Aureal Vortex2 SQ2500 and were pleased to find the speakers emitting distortion-free, superbsounding audio, even with the volume cranked all the way up. The BA4800 will also deliver twochannel sound, but why bother?

The two front satellites rest on

small tripod stands on your desktop; the two rear satellites come with 16-inch-high floor stands. The stands are sturdy, but in cramped quarters it would be nice to have the option of mounting the speakers on a wall. Additionally, the large subwoofer assembly, with a 6.5-inch cone, could easily cramp the available leg space beneath your desk, especially if you already store your PC's tower case there.

Setup is simple, thanks to the color-coded cables and plain-English instructions. The

> speakers also come supplied with generous lengths of cable-a small, but

important, consideration when trying to find the best positioning. The controls are conveniently located on the front of the right satellite speaker. One knob controls the power and overall volume, another balances the level of the surround-sound effects coming out of the rear speakers, and the third adjusts the subwoofer's volume. The system doesn't include a headphone jack or a remotecontrol puck.

For those seeking to add high-quality surround sound to games or DVD movies, the BA4800 is an excellent choice. Hearing bullets whiz by or planes flying overhead is a surefire way to be drawn into the experience and to shut out intruding reality.

-Richard and Andrea Stapleton





 $\star\star\star\star$

RATED 1 TO 5 STARS Excellent value; tons of

Performance not as good as

storage capacity

the competition's

Maxtor DiamondMax 60

PRODUCT:

Its low price and easy installation

 $\star\star\star\star$ RATED 1 TO 5 STARS

Realistic surround sound; impressive audio quality No headphone jack, wall mounts, or remote control

PRODUCT:

Boston Acoustics BA4800 COMPANY: **Boston Acoustics** Peabody, MA; 978-538-5136 www.bostonacoustics.com MFR. EST. PRICE: \$199.95 ZDNet Price It!" 3 3 7 6 7 For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number

NETWORKS

Phone Home for Free by PC

OST COMPUTER USERS WHO HAVE TRIED Internet-based phone calls can attest to the spotty sound quality and annoying echoes. However, the underlying technologies have recently undergone some improvements and a number of vendors are now coming out with hardware solutions that not only sound much better, but let you place free local and long-distance calls over the Internet. Actiontec's USB

InternetPhoneWizard is one such product, and its \$99.95-estimated cost could be the last you'll ever spend on phone calls.

The InternetPhoneWizard connects to your PC over a USB port. It can use any of five Internet telephony service providers (ITSPs) to route your calls over the Internet to phones on the regular phone network. Calls within the United States and Canada are free, and international calls cost as little as 8 cents per minute. (Some ITSPs now even offer free international

long distance to select countries.) Whether you have a standard modem connection or a broadband connection, you can call any person with a working phone, even if he or she doesn't have a computer.

The InternetPhoneWizard goes between your telephone and the phone line. Your phone continues to work normally over the regular telephone circuit until you activate the InternetPhoneWizard by pressing the telephone's pound key twice. Assuming your computer is logged into the Internet, you'll then hear a special, low-pitched dial tone, indicating that your Internet connection is ready. Just dial the phone number you want

> and your call goes through like a normal call.

Sound quality is equivalent to that of the average long-distance connection. It's not the crystal-clear, you-can-hear-a-pin-drop quality you get from a good fiber-optic connection, but it's far from the distorted, echoing sound you may have experienced with previous Internet phone connections.

Setting up and using the InternetPhone-Wizard is practically a no-brainer, so even the PC neophyte can benefit from its potential cost savings. With an up-front investment of less than \$100, the InternetPhoneWizard could pay for itself in no time. -Bill Dyszel





INTEL ANYPOINT PHONELINE HOME NETWORK 10 MBPS USB MODEL

Home Networking Made Easy

F YOU'RE AMONG THE FOLKS WHO JUMPED ON THE broadband bandwagon, and have more than one PC in your home, you stand to benefit from networking your systems together. Your home can share a single fast connection to the Web—and you can even save a few bucks in the process. Intel's \$99-estimated (per unit) AnyPoint Phoneline Home Network 10 Mbps USB device is one of the first external HomePNA 2.0-based phone-line networking kits to come along. For users who don't like to open up their systems or who have already filled their systems to capacity with add-in cards, the AnyPoint is the perfect solution.

Setting up the AnyPoint takes only a few minutes. Plug the device into your system's USB port, connect a standard phone cord between the adapter and the phone jack in your wall, and install the software. Of course, you'll need a unit for each PC in your home that you wish to network. In addition to sharing an Internet connection, the AnyPoint lets you

share files and printers across all your networked systems.

The AnyPoint comes with Intel's Internet Sharing Software (ISS). In addition to being easy to configure, ISS makes sharing an Internet connection as simple as can be-even if you use a dial-up modem connection. With ISS, you can dial into the Internet from any PC on the network, as

> long as the primary PC (the "server") is powered on.

Although the AnyPoint is rated at 10Mbps, Intel acknowledges that

the device's practical bandwidth is much closer to 4.5Mbps. In our testing, we experienced a sustained data-transfer rate that ranged from 3.5Mbps to 4Mbps. We saw the slower 3.5Mbps transfer rate only while transferring files between systems and simultaneously downloading data through a dial-up Internet connection.

Despite this negligible shortcoming, the AnyPoint's easy installation and competitive price make it an excellent choice if you're looking for a simple way to network your PCs at home.

-Neil Randall



RATED 1 TO 5 STARS

Some service providers connect you if you're behind Some service providers can'

PRODUCT: Actiontec USB InternetPhoneWizard

800-797-7001, 408-752-7700

ZD Net Price It!

3 3 8 2 8 For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number

DIRECT PRICE: \$99.95

COMPANY:

Sunnyvale, CA

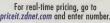
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www.actiontec.com

Economical way to make phone calls; easy to use

PRODUCT: Intel AnyPoint Phoneline Home Network 10 Mbps USB Model COMPANY: Intel Corp. Santa Clara, CA 877-649-5817, 408-765-8080 www.intel.com/anypoint







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Common Features

- > 102-key Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB, or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt. > Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with opt, LS-120, Iomega Zip Drive, or 2nd HDD
- > 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots which support ZV-Port and Card Bus
- > PCMCIA 56K Capable³ V90 Modem
- > 75.6w Smart Lithium-Ion Battery > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 IEEE 1394 Port & 1 Video-In Port
- > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1S. 1P. Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter

15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 700MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology 128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 20.0GB Hard Drive⁴

8X' Max. DVD-ROM Drive

15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 750MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology 256MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 20.0GB Hard Drive 8X1 Max. DVD-ROM Drive

Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB, or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt.
- > 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- > 3D Surround Sound
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot which supports ZV-Port
- and Card Bus > 10/100 Ethernet Lan Adapter
- > 56K Capable³ V90 Modem
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 2 USB Ports
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook; 12.8"w x 10.15"d x 1.49"h

15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology

64MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive⁴ 24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.) \$2095

15.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 700MHz Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology 128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive⁴ \$**73**95 8X1 Max. DVD-ROM Drive



Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB, or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt. > Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with
- opt. LS-120 or 2nd HDD
- > 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots which support ZV-Port and Card Bus
- > 56K Capable³ V90 Modem
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 IEEE 1394 Port
- > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Slim Notebook: 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.4"h

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 700MHz

Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology 128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive⁴ \$2195

8X1 Max. DVD-ROM Drive

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 750MHz Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology 128MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 20.0GB Hard Drive

8X1 Max DVD-ROM Drive



Common Features

- > 128KB On-Die L2 Cache (Intel® Celeron™ Processor) > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache (Intel® Pentium® III Processor)
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB, or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt > Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with
- ont LS-120 or 2nd HDD
- > 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots which support
- 7V-Port and Card Bus > 56K Capable³ V90 Modem
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 1 IEEE 1394 Port
- 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT > Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapte
- > Slim Notebook: 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.4"h

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Celeron™ Processor 600MHz 64MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 6.0GB Hard Drive 24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.) \$1/45

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display Mobile Pentium® III Processor 600MHz Featuring Intel® Speed Step™ Technology 64MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive 24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.) \$1945

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Common Features

Common Features

- > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache
- > 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video
- > Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt.
- > Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with opt. LS-120 or 2nd HDD
- > 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable
- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots which support ZV-Port and Card Bus
- > 56K Capable3 V90 Modem
- > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter > Slim Notebook: 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.4" h

Intel® Pentium® III Processor 700MHz

Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive⁴

14.1" XGA Active Matrix Display

64MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB 24X² Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X¹ Max. DVD opt.) \$1895

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Pentium® III Processor 700MHz

64MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive⁴ 8X1 Max. DVD-ROM Drive

\$1945

> 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video

opt. CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, or LS-120

> Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device

> Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface

> 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot

> 56K Capable³ V90 Modem > Smart Lithium-Ion Battery

> 1 USB Port & 1 TV-Out Port

> Microsoft® Windows® 98

> Carrying Case and AC Adapter

> Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt.

> 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone

> Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with

> 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable

> Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT

> Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone

> Super Slim Notebook: 11.93"w x 9.05"d x 1.16"h

Common Features



- > 128KB On-Die L2 Cache > 128KB On-Die L2 Cache (Intel® Celeron™ Processor) > 256KB On-Die L2 Cache (Intel® Pentium® III Processor)
 - > AGP 4MB S3 Pro 3D Video
 - Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt.
 - > 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
 - > 3D Sound Effect

Common Features

- > 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone
- > Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device
- > 2 Type II PCMCIA Slots which support ZV-Port and Card Bus
- > NiMH Battery (Smart Lithium-Ion Battery opt.)
- > Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface > 1 USB Port & 1 TV-Out Port
- > Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- > Jacks: 1 Headphone and 1 Microphone > A4 Size 86-Key Keyboard for Easy Typing
- > Microsoft® Windows® 98
- > Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- > Super Slim Notebook: 11"w x 9.4"d x 1.5"h

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Celeron™ Processor 500MHz 64MB 100MHz SDRAM expandable to 512MB Removable 6.0GB Hard Drive⁴ 24X2 Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X1 Max. DVD opt.) \$1645

> 128KB On-Die L2 Cache (Intel® Celeron™ Processor)

> Removable 6.0GB, 10.0GB or 20.0GB Hard Drive opt.

> 2 Built-In Stereo Speakers and 1 Built-In Microphone

> Removable 3.5" 1.44MB FDD exchangeable with

> 3D Surround Sound with Hardware Wavetable

> 2 Type II or 1 Type III PCMCIA Slots which support

> Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT

> Jacks: 1 Line-In, 1 Line-Out and 1 Microphone

> 2X AGP 8MB ATI Rage Pro 3D Video

> Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device

> Infra Red, Wireless Fast IR Interface > 2 USB Ports & 1 TV-Out Port

opt. LS-120 or 2nd HDD

ZV-Port and Card Bus

> 56K Capable³ V90 Modem

> Smart Lithium-Ion Battery

> Microsoft® Windows® 98

> Carrying Case and AC Adapter

> Slim Notebook: 12.4"w x 10.1"d x 1.4" h

> 256KB On-Die L2 Cache (Intel® Pentium® III Processor)

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Celeron™ Processor 500MHz 64MB SDRAM expandable to 256MB Removable 6.0GB Hard Drive 24X' Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X' Max. DVD opt.) \$1695

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8X1 Max. DVD-ROM Drive

13.3" XGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Pentium® III Processor 600MHz 64MB SDRAM expandable to 256MB Removable 10.0GB Hard Drive⁴ 24X' Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X' Max. DVD opt.) \$1845

12.1" SVGA Active Matrix Display Intel® Celeron™ Processor 500MHz 64MB SDRAM expandable to 256MB Removable 6.0GB Hard Drive⁴ 24X' Max. CD-ROM Drive (8X' Max. DVD opt.) \$1395

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NEC VERSA SXI

Have It Your Way With This Hot-Swapper

IRED OF MAKING COMPROMISES WHEN IT COMES TO NOTEBOOKS? NEC Computers is determined to meet as many needs as possible with its Versa SXi. The unit delivers top performance with maximum flexibility, thanks to a hot-swappable bay that supports six different storage modules. Furthermore, NEC has kept the weight of the core unit under 6 pounds. Although the battery life could use some improvement, most power users should be happy with this full-featured system.

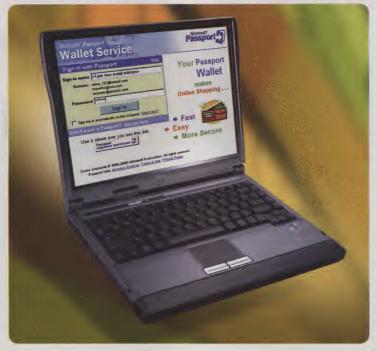
At \$3,399, the Versa SXi is definitely a premium-priced unit, and as such it comes with a high-performance configuration, including a 700MHz Pentium III processor, 128MB of SDRAM, a 12GB hard drive, a 3D-capable graphics chip with 8MB of VRAM,

and a 6x DVD-ROM drive. The one trade-off NEC made was the screen, which is 14.1 inches instead of the 15-inch size that is becoming standard for units in this class. NEC says the smaller screen size was necessary to maintain a lower weight-5.9 pounds without accessories, or 6.4 pounds with the AC adapter and a spare component for the modular bay. At 1.4x12.1x10 inches (HWD), the unit is quite sleek as well.

The Versa SXi's truly outstanding feature is the hot-swappable VersaBay III, an exceptionally useful feature for mobile professionals who need a lot of choices while on the road. The standard

configuration (which sells for \$3,199) includes both floppy and CD-ROM drives, but you can also choose among LS-120, CD-RW, DVD-ROM, and hard drives. The overall system price will vary depending on what drive you choose. Our \$3,399 test system came with a floppy drive and a DVD player, instead of the CD-ROM drive. You can purchase additional drives separately. Prices range from \$199 for an LS-120 to a steep \$695 for an 18GB hard drive. The bay let us swap the floppy and DVD-ROM drives on the fly without a

The IT department back at the home office will also appreciate that all the com-



ponents, as well as the AC adapter, can be used across the entire NEC notebook line. This flexible approach extends to connectivity options, where NEC hasn't missed a trick. In addition to the standard items (integrated modem, USB port, one Type III or two Type II PC Card slots, serial port, parallel port, VGA port, and PS/2 port), the notebook also supports dual video display—just the ticket for presentation pros.

From a performance standpoint, the SXi also delivers everything you'll ever need on the road. According to the unit's Business Winstone 99 scores, the SXi has more than enough horsepower for

business-minded applications in SpeedStep, performance, or batteryoptimized mode. (The SXi's processor speed in performance mode is 700MHz, and in batteryoptimized mode it is 550MHz.) In performance mode, the SXi's Winstone score of 26.7 is among the highest we've seen from notebooks thus

Its BatteryMark

3.0 time, on the other

hand, was merely average. In performance mode, the SXi lasted 2 hours and 56 minutes, which is about average for a high-end unit. In battery-optimized mode, the unit's result of 3 hours and 15 minutes was a bit better but still close to average.

Other drawbacks included stereo speakers that were barely audible even at the highest settings. When we used a pair of headphones, however, the unit sounded fine. In addition, the actuation buttons for the touch pad had a strangely flat feel, as if the springs were not under the buttons. Alternately, users can also double-tap on the touch pad.

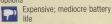
Fortunately, the keyboard did not suffer from similar

problems; we found it comfortable to use, with responsive travel. The unit comes with 87 keys, including dedicated arrow, page-up, and page-down keys.

NEC offers an above-average parts-andlabor warranty, covering the unit for three years. An added bonus is the one year of Global UltraCare Preferred Service, which includes door-to-door courier pickup and return of a damaged notebook. NEC says that repairs are usually made within one business day for common hardware problems. With its wide range of options and blazing-hot performance, the NEC Versa SXi should be just right for many mobile power users. -Richard S. Shim

 $\star\star\star\star$ RATED 1 TO 5 STARS

Great performance; flexible hot-swap bay with many



SYSTEM: NEC Versa SXi COMPANY: NEC Computers Sacramento, CA 888-632-8701, 916-388-0101

www.nec-computers.com
AS TESTED: 700MHz Pentium III; 128MB SDRAM; 12GB hard drive; 6x DVD-ROM drive; ATI Mobility-P graphics chip with 8MB of memory; 14.1-inch XGA active-matrix display: 56Kbps integrated modem; touch pad

DIRECT PRICE: \$3,399



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Speed	750 MHz	750 MHz	700 MHz	800 MHz
Display	14.1" TFT	14.1" TFT	14.1" TFT	14.1" XGA
Graphics	2x AGP	2x AGP	2x AGP	2x AGP
RAM	64 MB	64 MB	64 MB	64 MB
Hard Drive	6 GB	6 GB	12 GB	6 GB
DVD-ROM	6X	6X	6X	6X
Modem	56k/v.90	56k/v.90	56k/v.90	56k/v.90
3.5" Drive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free Internet	No	No	No	Yes
Price	\$3499	\$3297	\$2848	\$1999

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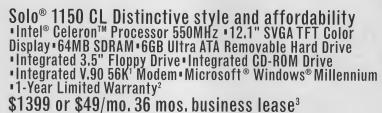
Gateway recommends Microsoft® Windows® 2000 Professional for business.

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DELL INSPIRON 5000E

Star of the Big Screen

Best S

CINEMA BUFFS, YOUR IDEAL NOTEBOOK HAS ARRIVED. WITH A stunning 15-inch screen and some of the best performance scores we've ever seen in a portable, the Dell Inspiron 5000e is perfect for watching DVDs, gaming, or—when work beckons—giving presentations. It's an

ideal desktop-replacement system, but as a travel companion, its substantial price and weight make it best suited for mini-moguls with cash to burn and interns to carry their luggage.

Priced at \$3,459, the Inspiron 5000e is equipped with Intel's superfast 750MHz Mobile Pentium III processor. The CPU includes Intel's SpeedStep technology, which

powers the system down to 600MHz when running off the battery (although it can be set back at 750MHz manually). The added firepower really makes a difference. Most of our benchmarks exceeded expectations, especially the Business Winstone 99 score of 27.1 in full-performance mode, which surpassed other everything-but-theprinter laptops costing hundreds of dollars more.

This racecar engine is paired with almost everything you'd expect from a luxury ride: a whopping 30GB of storage, 128MB of SDRAM on two DIMMs, a V.90 modem, and an 8x DVD-ROM drive. You'll also find two

USB ports, an S-Video output (TV out), IrDA, and two PC Card slots. The usual parallel and serial connections and a VGA output are all there as well. The omission of an IEEE 1394 (FireWire) port was puzzling, considering the rest of this power-packed configuration.

While the integrated floppy drive is fixed, you can swap several options in the Media Bay, including the DVD-ROM drive and second battery bundled with our test configuration. The Media Bay will also accommodate options such as a Zip drive (available direct from Dell for \$139) or CD-RW drive (for \$289). If you opt for a CD-ROM rather than a DVD-ROM drive, you can save \$130.



All of the Inspiron's outstanding features take a backseat to the stunning 15-inch display, which is truly a showstopper. With a phenomenal 1,400x1,050-pixel resolution, shadows and subtle shades of color are crystal-clear, making the system ideal for gaming, watching DVD movies, or giving presentations. (Note that if you use the VGA port to connect to an external monitor, you'll only get a maximum resolution of 1,280x1,024.)

At a resolution of 1,400x1,050, this screen can easily display images taken with a 1- or 1.3-megapixel digital camera. And while onscreen fonts do appear rather small, if you use large spreadsheets you'll be amazed at how many cells you can display.

In fact, with 117 pixels per inch, the screen is so sharp that those sitting around you on your next flight will easily be able to see what you're working on. Of course, you'll have to be flying in first class, because that's the only place you'll be able to open this 12.9x10.5-inch giant, which weighs in at a not-insubstantial 7.54 pounds.

Fortunately, the Inspiron 5000e is also a

monster when it comes to opening multiple proRATED 1 TO 5 STARS
Big, sharp screen;
excellent performance
No IEEE 1394 port;
mediocre battery life

SYSTEM:
Dell Inspiron 5000e
COMPANY:
Dell Computer Corp.
Round Rock, TX; 800-917-3355
www.dell.com

AS TESTED: 750MHz
Pentium III; 128MB SDRAM;
30GB hard drive; 8x DVD-ROM
drive; 15-inch SXGA+ activematrix display; internal 3.5-inch
floppy drive; 16MB ATI Rage
Mobility 128 graphics chip; ESS
Maestro sound card; V.90
modem; lithium-ion battery;
Windows 98 Second Edition;
Microsoft Office 2000 Small
Rusiness

DIRECT PRICE: \$3,459



For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

grams and juggling spreadsheets, as noted by its top performance numbers. Video playback was smooth from the DVD-ROM drive, and the built-in stereo speakers were better than average. The 16MB ATI Rage Mobility 128 accelerator will keep business users happy, although it won't beat out high-end desktop gaming systems. The only benchmark test result that wasn't outstanding was battery life. Its BatteryMark 3.0 runtime of 2 hours and 57 minutes in batteryoptimized mode—and 2 hours and 48 minutes in maximum performance mode—was acceptable but mediocre for this notebook's class.

One ergonomic detail that's worth mentioning: As with other

large-screen notebooks, the top half of the Inspiron is so big that when closed it actually extends slightly beyond the edge of the bottom half. You have to be careful not to catch the edge when you're carrying it.

Nevertheless, the 5000e is a tough package to beat. Dell includes Microsoft Office 2000 Small Business with the unit, and throws in a three-year onsite warranty (with service usually provided the next day). Combine this with round-the-clock toll-free tech support and the system's brilliant screen, and the Inspiron 5000e is worth its substantial price—especially when compared with other, even pricier systems. Just make sure your budget and biceps can handle it.

—John R. Quain



What would you call a feature-rich notebook that excels in both multimedia and performance? We call it our LifeBook C Series. A beautifully engineered notebook that acts like a desktop; this is the ultimate multimedia machine. With its LifeBook CoolView status panel, wireless IR mouse* and personal CD player this superstar provides advanced Yamaha® audio and ATI® video features you want.

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ACER TRAVELMATE 524TXV

A Desk-Worthy Roadster

ETTING A TRUE DESKTOP REPLACEMENT IN A NOTEBOOK USED TO be a real challenge. A fully stacked machine was likely to bust either your back or your budget. Today, however, models such as Acer America Corp.'s TravelMate 524TXV are clearing off desks everywhere. Although performance could be better, this unit packs a competitive array of hardware into a frame that weighs less than 7 pounds and costs a reasonable \$2,399.

Fitting on an airplane tray table is a bit of a squeeze for the TravelMate, as it measures a rather bulky 1.4x12.2x10 inches (HWD). But if you can make the room, you'll appreciate the computing power the TravelMate puts at your disposal.

With its 14.1-inch TFT screen, three-spindle design, 650MHz Pentium III processor, 64MB of SDRAM, and 12.1GB hard drive, the TravelMate certainly doesn't leave anything out. If you don't need DVD, you can save a few dollars by opting for a 24x CD-ROM drive. If you yearn to burn, you can swap in an optional CD-RW drive. The one minor drawback here is that you can't substitute a second battery for either of the drives—a feature that would save you from having to stop work to swap batteries on long flights.

Fortunately, the TravelMate gets good mileage on its single lithium-ion cell. In our

demanding BatteryMark test, the system lasted more than 3.5 hours—even without the processor's SpeedStep feature enabled, which saves power by switching to a lower speed. As for the rest of the notebook's test scores, they were surprisingly low across the board, with a CPUmark 99 of 41.3 and a Business Winstone 99 score of 19.6. By comparison, our 500MHz Pentium III benchmark system achieved a CPUmark of 47.2 and a Winstone score of 22.8. The TravelMate is plenty fast, but it should be

A strong video subsystem helps make up for some of this sluggishness. The ATI Rage Mobility-M1 graphics accelerator fea-



tures 8MB of video memory, somewhat rare for a notebook. (Many have 4MB or less.) For everything from video editing to games, the TravelMate has power to spare. We loaded up Quake III and found that it looked excellent on the gorgeous screen and ran at very playable frame rates.

The screen also provides a great showcase for movies on DVD. The TravelMate's 6x drive proved more than up to the task, delivering smooth playback with nary a hiccup, so long as no other programs were running. As for the audio, like many notebooks, it lacked bass, but proved loud and clear enough for movies and music. Because the speakers are mounted below

the screen rather than near the keyboard, they project outward instead of upward-a definite plus.

Like any desktop replacement worth its salt, the TravelMate has a built-in V.90 modem and a 10/100Mbps Fast Ethernet adapter. Equally welcome are the system's two USB ports, double the number found on many notebooks. The rest of the Travel-

> Mate's expansion options are the usual fare: two Type II PC

MFR. EST. PRICE: \$2,399 ZDNet Price It!" 3 3 8 6 4 For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

RATED 1 TO 5 STARS Long battery life; great video

800-733-2237, 408-432-6200

www.acer.com/aac AS TESTED: 650MHz

Pentium III; 64MB SDRAM;

12.1GB hard drive; 14.1-inch XGA active-matrix LCD; 6x DVD-ROM drive; ATI Rage Mobility-M1

graphics chip with 8MB SDRAM

ALi audio chip; V.90 modem and 10/100 Ethernet jacks; touch pad

with scroll button; Microsoft

Works Suite 2000; additional

Middling performance; short warranty

minded features

SYSTEM: Acer TravelMate 524TXV

COMPANY:

San Jose, CA

Acer America Corp.

Card slots, three audio jacks, a parallel port, a serial port, an infrared transceiver, and more.

Acer earns kudos for equipping the TravelMate with two convenience-minded features: the notebook's quartet of programmable quick-launch buttons, which ease everything from jumping to a specific Web site to loading your word processor, and a scroll key designed for push-button scrolling in long documents and on Web sites. The scroll key, mounted below the two touch-pad buttons, is a feature no notebook should be without, as it saves a lot of tedious pointing and clicking.

Acer bundles a smart mix of software, including Microsoft

Works 2000 (a versatile and novice-friendly applications suite), PC-Doctor, PC-cillin 98, and TimeMachine, a utility that allows users to recover lost or damaged files, or revert the system to an earlier state of operation.

The TravelMate's warranty is on the short side, at one year. Fortunately, you can add up to two additional years for \$99 per year. Acer's toll-free technical support is available around the clock.

Boasting enough features to make a desktop PC jealous and a travel-friendly battery life, the Acer TravelMate 524TXV is a smartly designed notebook suitable for the office or the frequent-flyer lounge.

-Rick Broida



How unique can any notebook really be? Well, ours weighs-in at under 4 pounds which makes it ultra-light. And it has a flexible bay built right in which makes it ultra-mobile (the only one of it's kind). So since you have the option of what device you use (like a DVD), this LifeBook S Series notebook makes your life on the road ultra-convenient. Pretty Smart! Pretty Small! Pretty Unique!

Fujitsu recommends Windows® 2000 Professional for business.

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KODAK PALMPIX CAMERA



Add Snap to Your Palm

VER THOUGHT YOUR PALM COULD MAKE PEOPLE say cheese? Your PDA could be getting smiles in no time with Eastman Kodak Co.'s \$179 Kodak PalmPix Camera, a clip-on unit that turns most Palm handhelds into a digital camera. Although the 24-bit color images can be a bit fuzzy, this highly pocketable device is a handy way for Palm users to take photos on the go.

The PalmPix is both small and simple, packing a lens and a bat-

tery compartment for two AAAs into a unit that's tinier than a pack of cigarettes and about as light. It snaps onto the bottom of any Palm III or Palm VII series handheld. (A \$35 adapter provides compatibility with the Palm V series.) Once you've installed the PalmPix applet on your Palm, you're ready to shoot. The handheld's screen serves as the viewfinder, and its memory stores the pictures.

The camera offers two resolutions: 320x240 or 640x480. In high-resolution mode, the press of a Palm button also activates a 2x digital zoom. Each highresolution photo consumes about 100K, so if your Palm has only 2MB of RAM, you'll feel the memory crunch after just a few snaps. Fortunately, the PalmPix software tells you how many pictures you can take, based on resolution and the amount of available memory.

The software lets you select which photos to transfer to your PC when you synchronize, and you can choose BMP or JPEG format. Kodak supplies NewSoft's Presto Mr. Photo for editing, e-mailing, and printing pictures.

In our tests, the PalmPix produced fairly clear and colorful pictures at 640x480, but the lower resolution was too blurry to be useful. The camera lacks a flash, and the Palm's low-

> resolution gray-scale screen makes a terrible viewfinder. (Even the

Palm IIIc's color screen displays previews in gray scale.) Accurately framing a shot is challenging at best, and virtually impossible in dimly lit areas. The unit is also a bit expensive; stand-alone cameras with this level of resolution often sell for under \$100.

Nevertheless, the Kodak PalmPix Camera delivers images that are more than sufficient for e-mailing to friends, and its small size makes it more than handy. If you're a photominded Palm user, you'd do well to consider this clever accessory. -Rick Broida



BOXLIGHT XD-9M

Small and Light, But Oh, So Bright

ORTABLE MULTIMEDIA PROJECTORS USED TO sacrifice brightness and resolution for light weight. But while your ache-free back might have led to better presentations, the visuals were best for just a few folks sitting around a small table. Today's crop of ultralight projectors, however, raises the image-quality bar without swelling weight above 5 pounds. The Boxlight XD-9m, weighing a mere 4.8 pounds, is a good case in point. And while it's not a bargain at \$5,499, it costs \$500 less than

the very similar InFocus LP335, which features the same plastics and base specifications.

The XD-9m is rated to deliver a whopping 1,000 lumens of brightness thanks to a 120-watt mercury arc lamp and single DLP chip. It features a maximum 1,024x768 XGA native resolution but handled the 800x600 image from our test notebook without significant pixelation.

The image was definitely bright enough for any large conference room, even with room lights

on. The picture was smooth and rich, with consistent brightness from corner to corner. Unfortunately, audio quality was particularly tinny, due to the unit's small size and its tiny 1-watt monaural speaker. You're better off just running the sound from your notebook or schlepping along some multimedia speakers if you need real audio oomph.

USB has made remote-mouse-control setup on today's projectors pretty painless. The XD-9m ships with a single cable that includes both the monitor-out and USB connections in one, and both are virtually plug-and-play. We simply rebooted our notebook to activate the remote-mouse capability.

The remote itself is very standard and rather limited, featuring a trigger left-mouse click, a membrane-style cursor control, and five dedicated buttons for important features. Cursor control was accurate, if a little stiff, but we'd like to have seen dedicated volume buttons and a laser pointer in a unit at this price. Otherwise, remote-controlling the XD-9m was a cinch.

The Boxlight XD-9m proves that ultraportable projectors are finally getting powerful enough to compete with their heavier, more feature-rich brethren, at least when it comes to image quality and brightness. Backed with a two-year parts-andlabor warranty, the unit is an excellent choice for presenters on the go. -Asa Somers



clear images; easy setup Poor sound, months control functions Poor sound; limited remote-

RATED 1 TO 5 STARS

Compact and lightweight; works with virtually all Palm

you're shooting

PRODUCT: Kodak PalmPix Camera

COMPANY:

Rochester, NY

Eastman Kodak Co.

www.kodak.com

LIST PRICE: \$179

800-235-6325, 716-724-4000

DNet Price It!"

3 3 8 5 8

For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

Palm's low-resolution screen Palm's low-resolution sere makes it hard to see what

PRODUCT: Boxlight XD-9m COMPANY: Boxlight Poulsbo, WA 800-762-5757, 360-779-7901 www.boxliaht.com MFR. EST. PRICE: \$5,499



For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.







RIM 957 WIRELESS HANDHELD

Pack Your E-Mail For the Road

N TODAY'S REAL-TIME ECONOMY, CHECKING E-MAIL AT home and at work is beyond insufficient. Every professional who has lost all understanding of work-life balance knows that wireless e-mail access is a must. Fortunately for these overachievers, Research In Motion (RIM) has introduced the RIM 957 Wireless Handheld, a mobile messaging machine that's destined to be their

constant companion. It's not cheap at \$499, though.

RIM achieved success with its BlackBerry two-way pager, which caused finger strain for countless gogetters due to its minuscule screen and keyboard. The RIM 957 looks like a cross between those earlier models and a PDA, and at 0.7x3.1x4.6 inches and 5.3 ounces, it's around the same size as a Palm V. The unit is based on a 32-bit 386 Intel processor with 5MB of RAM and is powered by a lithium-ion battery. New messages are announced by either a vibrating or audio alert.

A larger size makes the RIM 957 a lot more comfortable when it comes to reading and writing e-mail. The 19-line backlit display made the biggest difference, but because the keyboard has only 31 keys, we still spent much time searching for secondary key functions such as numbers and symbols. Fortunately, the device allows users to program canned responses, and navigating the menu was intuitive and easy with the scroll button.

The RIM 957 can also manage your personal information thanks to synchronization with popular programs such as Microsoft Outlook and Schedule+, Lotus Organizer, Act, and GoldMine. The unit can also synchronize with

> your e-mail inbox if you use Microsoft Exchange;

Lotus Notes support is expected by the end of the year. We found synchronization using the included docking cradle to be relatively speedy, and experienced no hiccups or pauses while putting the unit through its paces.

Service via BellSouth's nationwide Mobitex wireless data network costs \$39.95 per month for unlimited use, which is certainly competitive. We found the coverage to be good even indoors. Although the hardware is expensive, people who absolutely, positively must be reachable everywhere will find this device indispensable. -Richard S. Shim



CREATIVE NOMAD II MG

A Portable Sound Studio

JUDGING BY THE NOMAD II MG, IT'S TRUE that the best (and most expensive) things come in small packages. Like previous MP3 players from Creative Technology, this unit combines state-of-

the-art features with good sound in a petite package. With 64MB of memory, an FM radio, and voice- and radio-record functions, the Nomad II MG should answer most needs for wired audiophiles—but that's only if they can afford its steep \$399 price.

Still, you do get what you pay for: The sleek magnesium unit weighs less than 3 ounces and includes a SmartMedia memory slot, rechargeable batteries, neat collapsible headphones, and a USB docking cradle. And despite its abundance of features, it's still easy to use.

Control buttons for stop, fast-forward, rewind, and pause are placed along the sides of the unit for one-handed use. The display is on the small side, but it's equipped with a backlight and is

fairly intuitive to navigate. The batteries took just under 2 hours to charge and lasted through about 8 hours of continuous use.

We found that the Nomad II MG delivered fairly rich sound and acceptable bass while playing MP3 files compressed at 96Kbps. The unit currently supports the MP3 and Windows Media Audio formats but is upgradable so users will be able to download support for future audio formats.

The relatively user-friendly Nomad II Manager software and fast USB connection make audio transfer painless. Transferring a full 64MB of audio from our PC to the Nomad II MG took just under 3 minutes,

and the desktop software

uses a simple Windows Explorer-type view for managing music files. The included MusicMatch software lets you rip tracks from your CD collection at a variety of compression

Overall, the Nomad II MG delivers on the promise of MP3: It makes music truly portable, and unlike earlier players, it minimizes the headaches involved with file management and transfer. Although it'll take a serious bite out of your Gold Card, once you've bought the Creative Nomad II MG, you will never leave home without it.

-R.S.S.





RATED 1 TO 5 STARS

access: solid features Expensive; tiny keyboard

PRODUCT: RIM 957 Wireless Handheld

877-255-2377, 519-888-7465

MFR. EST. PRICE: \$499 for device; \$39.95 per month for

ZDNet Price It!™

3 3 8 6 5

For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

COMPANY:

www.rim.net

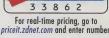
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Ibuypower.com's \$1,128 Pocket Espresso PC (EPC), a unique portable computer designed for back-and-forth travelers.

Imagine the CPU box of your desktop boiled down to its barest essentials, and you have the 1-pound Pocket EPC. It's about the size and shape of a 300page paperback and includes all the processing, memory, and connectivity hardware of a PC. All you have to provide is a monitor and keyboard. Our evaluation model contained a 533MHz Celeron CPU, 128MB of RAM, and a 6GB hard drive.

Our test model worked exceedingly well. We plugged in the included AC adapter; connected a 17-inch monitor, full-size keyboard, and wheel mouse to the Pocket EPC's standard ports (which also include S-Video and dual USB); and powered up the device without a hitch. You'll also find a built-in speaker, a 16-bit sound subsystem with audio-out and a built-in touch pad-so you don't need a mouse.

An included CD-ROM/floppy drive combo (which also includes parallel and serial ports) connects via a proprietary port. It doesn't support hot-swapping, but our evaluation module worked flawlessly. The Pocket EPC outshone even 600MHz Celeron desk-

> tops on Business Winstone 99, with a score of 19.9, while its Graphics WinMark score of 74.2 is standard

for this processor class. Ultimately, the Pocket EPC isn't for every-

one. You'll need a monitor, keyboard, and modem/Ethernet card setup everywhere you go. We'd like to see the company offer a docking station that makes setup a one-step affair.

Nevertheless, there's no disputing that the Pocket EPC is reasonably priced for a portable PC, and it comes with a standard one-year warranty and 24-hour-daily toll-free tech support.

-Asa Somers

 $\star\star\star$

RATED 1 TO 5 STARS Superportability; good performance

Requires separate monitor

and keyboard

Pocket Espresso PC COMPANY: Ibuypower.com

Los Angeles, CA 888-462-3899, 626-281-8262

ibuvpower.com

Windows 98

SYSTEM: Ibuypower.com

AS TESTED: 533MHz Celeron: 128MB RAM: 6GB hard

drive; 24x CD-ROM drive; 4MB

shared video RAM; touch pad;

DIRECT PRICE: \$1,128

ZDNet Price It!"

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PALM M100

A Pocketbook-Friendly Paln

IF YOU'VE MANAGED TO AVOID BUYING A Palm so far, it may be time to look twice. Palm wants to convert even more fans with its latest device, the Palm m100. Although it has a smaller screen and

fewer programs than higher-end models, first-timers should be drawn to its rock-bottom price of \$149 and curvy shape.

Lower-price Palm units have tended to be boxy and bland. That's clearly not the case with the tapered m100, which weighs in

at a hand-friendly 5 ounces. Palm has even lifted a page from cellphone design: It offers snap-on cases in five different colors, for an estimated \$19.95 each.

The screen is around threequarters of the size of previous displays, but a higher resolution allows it to fit the same amount of detail onscreen. Still, you may find content such as street maps difficult to read. But the smaller screen gives the unit a sturdy feel, especially when combined with the windowed flip-cover. Unlike

previous covers, which jutted out at an annoying angle, this one rotates a full 360 degrees and lets you view a clock/calendar with the push of a button when shut.

The Memo Pad button has been replaced with a key for a new Note Pad jotter program (Memo Pad can be accessed with onscreen icons), and the Expense and E-mail applications have been omitted. Otherwise, the m100 retains Palm's userfriendly interface and applications, providing simple yet comprehensive management of contacts, appointments, tasks, and memos, not to mention thousands of third-party extras.

 $\star\star\star\star\star$ RATED 1 TO 5 STARS Slick design; low price; it's a Palm Smaller screen

PRODUCT: Palm m100 COMPANY: Paln San Mateo, CA: 800-235-6325 www.palm.com MFR. EST. PRICE: \$149

ZDNet Price It! 3 3 8 5 9

For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

With 2MB of RAM and an IR port, there's plenty of room to swap contacts and games with other Palm fans. And the unit should last about a month on a pair of AAA batteries. Synchronizing with your desktop PC remains as effortless as ever, though the m100 comes with a serial cable instead of the traditional cradle (which is available separately).

The m100 is a pocket- (and pocketbook-) friendly unit that's sure to help Palm win over lots of beginners. Although the corporate crowd may be better served with more advanced models, it's only a matter of time until they're beaming appointments to their m100-wielding kith and kin. -Rick Broida





**** SAVER ATHLON

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- Stereo High-Power Speakers
- 56K Fax/Data / Voice Modem
- Mid Tower Case
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Super Saver 2

Intel Pentium III 650 CPU

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- 13 GB U, D. HDD / 1.44MB FDD
- 17' NI..27 Monitor
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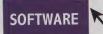
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EXTENSIS PORTFOLIO 5.0



Create Order From PC Chaos

IF YOU'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO organize all the various media files on your PC, look no further than Extensis Portfolio 5.0. This powerful disk organizer makes it easy to catalog entire directories of

files into thumbnail galleries, offers a superior selection of search and sorting tools, and features outstanding integration with SQL databases, enterprise networks, and the Web.

Setting up Portfolio is easy. Importing documents takes just a few minutes, and creating a new catalog of files is as simple as doubleclicking on a directory name or dragging individual documents into an Extensis window. You can import any type of file, and merely

selecting a document's thumbnail displays its contents or launches an editor. The intuitive, customizable interface includes handy dockable floating palettes and a comprehensive help function.

Portfolio's sorting and searching capabilities are equally impressive. Each document can be assigned an unlimited number of sort fields, as well as userdefined and system-generated keywords. And the program's flexible search engine can span multiple catalogs, using complex combinations of keywords and fields as search criteria.

One of Portfolio's greatest strengths is its near-seamless integration with distributed work environments and other media repositories. You can export catalogs as searchable Web pages that include active links between thumbnails and source documents. Users on different machines can even share catalogs through client/server or peer-to-peer connections.

Portfolio also offers useful features such as Digimarc watermarking, the ability to embed text annotations into graphics files, user-level password security, and system-generated slide shows that launch automatically when a catalog is opened. Portfolio even integrates AppleScript and Visual Basic scripting support, which lets you automate chores such as database publishing and database synchronization.

Extensis offers two upgrades for the software: The Portfolio Server module extends the

> program's catalogsharing features to larg-

er workgroups distributed across enterprisewide TCP/IP networks, and the Portolio SQL Connect module makes it possible to integrate Portfolio catalogs with distributed Oracle and Microsoft SQL databases. Both modules add an extra layer of functionality to the software, although both come with hefty price tags.

Even on its own, though, Extensis Portfolio is one of the most flexible and usable media managers we've seen. It's fast, easy to use, and powerful enough to meet the needs —Don Labriola of any organization.



**** RATED 1 TO 5 STARS

Broad functionality; excellent network and database

Expensive Server and SQL upgrades

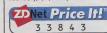
PRODUCT:

Extensis Portfolio 5.0 COMPANY: Creativepro.com

800-796-9798, 503-274-2020 www.extensis.com
REQUIRES: 32MB RAM;

4MB hard drive space. Windows: Pentium CPU; Windows 95, 98, 2000, or NT 4.0. Mac: PowerPC; Mac OS 8.1 or later

MFR. EST. PRICE: \$199.95 (Portfolio 5.0); \$2,499 (Portfolio Server 5.0 with five licenses); \$7,500 (Portfolio SQL)



For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

ASTOUND PRESENTATION 7.0

Astound the Competition

USINESSES OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES DEPEND ON presentation-software packages. Armed with a cuttingedge program such as Astound Presentation 7.0 and a halfway-coherent outline, anyone in the office can quickly assemble a slide show of professional quality, complete with audio,

video, and animation—a feat that would have been impossible just a few years ago.

Since its initial release, Astound has established itself as the nimblest presentation application available. Version 7.0 builds on that reputation with a raft of features aimed largely at distributed Web publishing. In fact, Astound blurs the line between conventional slide shows and Web publishing. The program can convert slides, complete with complex presentation effects such as 303 * * # # A MOSO

timelines, transitions, and path animation, to both static and dynamic HTML pages, and upload the entire package by FTP to your Web server. You can also use Astound to create a Web conference with the software's Internet Conference Center.

Despite the package's lack of documentation. Astound is easy to learn. You can use the stylish templates to create a slide-show prototype; add text, objects, sound, and movies; and orchestrate the show with sophisticated transition effects. And Astound's simple dragand-drop interface and well-designed wizards

make using relatively complex features-such as creating animations, interactive buttons and objects, image maps, and slides—a breeze.

For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.

Even if you already own a copy of Power-Point, you might want to invest in Astound. You can open PowerPoint templates and presentations and add superlative special effects before publishing or packaging your show. Suffice it to say, Astound is still the pick of the presentationgraphics crop, and a must-have if you need to incorporate sophisticated multimedia into your -Susan Glinert presentations.

Excellent multimedia and Internet publishing features Poor documentation

PRODUCT:

Astound Presentation 7.0 COMPANY: Astound Toronto, ON, Canada 877-278-6863, 416-207-0605

www.astound.com REQUIRES: 32MB RAM; 40MB hard drive space; Windows 95, 98, 2000, or NT 4.0







Its loyalty can be easily bought.

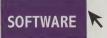
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ADOBE LIVEMOTION



Liven Up Your Web Creation

OR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, MACROMEDIA HAS been the leading supplier of high-end multimedia Webdesign tools. But its time as king of the hill may be coming to an end. Adobe Systems' LiveMotion lets you design and optimize animated rollovers, navigation bars, and other graphics for export to Flash or GIF format, and is the first product that truly goes head to

head with Macromedia's multimediaediting program, Fireworks.

Users of Illustrator and Photoshop will find the LiveMotion interface instantly familiar, because it shares the look and feel of those other Adobe products. Tabbed palettes provide quick access to a variety of attributes, such as opacity and 3D effects, and you'll find a new Timeline palette for adding and editing the animations. Documents in LiveMotion are composed of objects, such as geometric objects, text, or

images. You create these objects by using the software's drawing tools, by importing them, or by dragging one from the well-stocked Library palette. An object's appearance and actions, such as sounds, textures, animation behaviors, and color, are then applied as attributes. Of course, the software supplies a library of predesigned effects that can be added to individual objects.

One of LiveMotion's coolest features is the way it handles animated text. You can break words apart into individual letters and animate them separately without losing the ability to edit the text or add new effects to it.

> Another nice feature is the ability to link rollovers to an object state, which lets you simultaneously apply

3 3 8 3 2 For real-time pricing, go to priceit zanet com and enter number

the same effect to several objects. And although LiveMotion is vector-based like CorelDraw and Illustrator, you can still take advantage of Photoshop filters. LiveMotion is well-matched against Fireworks, although for \$299, the product is quite pricey (and about \$100 more than the Macromedia product). Nevertheless, Web designers may find that the program's features and ease of use are worth the extra expense.

-Susan Glinert

RATED 1 TO 5 STARS Superb drag-and-drop

effects: copious export

PRODUCT: Adobe LiveMotion COMPANY: Adobe Systems

800-833-6687, 408-536-6000 www.adobe.com
REQUIRES: Pentium II or

faster; 64MB RAM; 100MB hard drive space; Windows 98 or

2000, or NT with Service Pack 4

MFR. EST. PRICE: \$299

ZDNet Price It!

No text along a path;

San Jose, CA



PEACHTREE COMPLETE ACCOUNTING 8.0

S WE'VE SEEN WITH SEVERAL NEW DESKTOP accounting software packages, Peachtree Complete Accounting 8.0 seeks to make use of the Web's resources to enhance its own usefulness. This latest version of the venerable multiuser small-business accounting program does include some new accounting features, including several new business reports, but its most significant enhancement is the embedded Web browser that displays business-related information in new-and sometimes more useful-ways.

Nevertheless, the basic mechanisms of Peachtree Complete

appear to be the same as in previous versions of the software. The same step-by-step wizard, for example, helps you get started with the program. All the modules that a small business needs, such as General Ledger, Accounts Receivable and Payable, Inventory, Payroll, Time Billing, and Fixed Assets, are still there. And the program still includes all the necessary forms for processing money in and out of your business, from checks to

invoices to purchase orders. Getting around Peachtree Complete is easier, however, due to the more logically arranged menu system and graphical navigation tool. In addition to the 100-plus standard reports that come with the program, version 8.0 includes several new ones, such as a Tax Liability report and a Print by Vendor report. The software even includes a new Financial Report wizard, which walks you step by step through the process of building a financial report.

The most impressive update to Peachtree Complete, however, comes from the new Peachtree Today icon, which opens the embedded browser and the three screens to which the browser links. The Welcome screen displays a collection of housekeeping tasks, such as a list of common tasks, help

files, and tips. In addition, the My Business screen pro-

vides a snapshot of your company's bottom line, including information such as aged receivables and payables, budget variance, and the like. Finally, the My Resources screen offers real-time information and resources from the Web, including a free tool for creating a limited Web site.

Peachtree remains one of the most powerful, customizable small-business accounting programs on the market. But unless you want the new Webintegration tools, little in Peachtree Complete Accounting 8.0 will make a compelling case for upgrading from version 7.0. -Kathy Yakal



Rock-solid features; strong usability tools Slight differentiation from previous version

PRODUCT: Peachtree Complete Accounting 8.0 COMPANY:

Peachtree Software Norcross, GA 800-228-0068, 770-724-4000

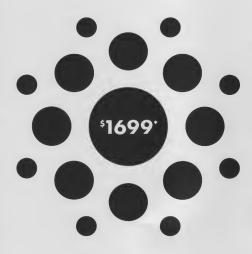
www.peachtree.com REQUIRES:

150MHz Pentium-class CPU: 32MB RAM (64MB recommended); 60MB hard drive space; Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0; Windows 95, 98, 2000, or NT 4.0 LIST PRICE: \$269.95



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new on/off button for touch pad and new rubber bumpers for extra durability





REAL ENTERTAINMENT CENTER PLUS

Entertainment Gets Real

* * * (RATED 1 TO 5 STARS)

ou expect a lot from a program that's touted as the PC's answer to a home entertainment center. And although RealNetworks' new Real Entertainment Center Plus delivers on much of that promise-bundling updated versions of its popular



RealJukebox, RealPlayer, and RealDownload software into a single package—the result may leave you wanting more.

The centerpiece of Real Entertainment Center Plus is the much-improved RealJukebox 2. No longer a simple MP3 jukebox program, RealJukebox has matured into a powerful multimedia-file player and organizer. The software now supports a wide range of file formats,

SOFTWARE

including MP3, RealAudio, WAV, and Windows Media (WMA). CD recording has been noticeably improved as well, and you can even cross-fade your music DJ-style for nonstop play. In addition, more audio plug-ins are included, more portable MP3 players are supported, and more skins are available for download. RealJukebox 2 even sports a new browser-like interface that makes using the program a lot easier.

> The package also includes Real-Player 8, a new version of RealNetworks' flagship software package, which now boasts VHS-like video streaming over broadband Internet connections. higher video

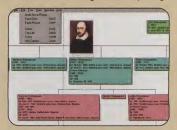
frame rates when using dial-up connections, and MP3 streaming support for files that reside on RealServers. RealDownload 4, meanwhile, is a great program for managing your file downloads. You can pause a download, resume where you left off if disconnected, or group multiple files into a single session. The program installs into your browser and appears whenever you download a file.

GENERATIONS GRANDE SUITE 8.0

Uncovering Your Roots

very family has a unique and elaborate history that's waiting to be told. Unfortunately, keeping track of it all can prove rather frustrating. Whether you're just starting out or have been investigating your ancestry for years, SierraHome's Generations Grande Suite 8.0 can help simplify your efforts with some of the most powerful, comprehensive, and easy-to-use genealogical tools ever assembled in a single software package.

Setup is a breeze. A concise tutorial covers all of the software's essential features, which range from basic family-tree charting to more complicated genealogical searches. You can start by generating family cards with the information already available to you, such as the names, birthdays, occupations, and miscellaneous biographical notes of immediate relatives. Designating relationships such as spouse, mother,



father, and child will automatically link individuals accordingly.

Generations' drag-and-drop interface lets you easily customize your family tree and add photos, video clips, and audio clips to individual entries. You can also generate statistical reports, timeline charts, and other informative documents. Most impressive is a new feature that lets you generate a 3D family tree. You can then tilt, zoom, and otherwise manipulate the available charts, complete with attached photos.

Spanning 31 CD-ROMs, Generations is not limited to the information you provide. The software includes access to more than 350 million names and resources, the entire digitized 1800 U.S. Census, Civil War muster rolls, the Social Security death index, and links to more than 60,000 genealogy Web sites. In addition to the software, SierraHome also includes the book Netting Your Ancestors: Genealogical Research on the Net, a guide to online heritage quests by genealogy guru Cyndi Howells.

To add a truly personal touch to your biological quest, you can use the bundled version of MasterCook Heritage Edition software to preserve family recipes alongside the appropriate family photos and clip art. And you can post all of your findings (culinary and otherwise) online, where your descendants may well enjoy them for generations to come. (SierraHome; \$89.95; www.sierrahome.com)

-Avital Fryman

While all three programs perform their respective tasks with aplomb,

CANON OFFICEREADY BUSINESS PLANS

Getting Down to Business

hether you hope to start your own business or work your way up the corporate ladder, chances are you'll need to write a business plan at some point. For those who have never done so before, it can be a daunting task. Fortunately, Canon Software's OfficeReady Business Plans is here to help.

OfficeReady may install as a separate program, but it

uses Microsoft Word as its authoring environment, letting you create your business plans in an application you are probably already familiar with.

The program lets you choose from several pre-existing business-plan templates for various types of companies, such as e-commerce or Internet startups, or lets you create your own customized

MA SHARE SECTION SHORES TO SECTION STATES

plans that meet your exact specifications.

OfficeReady also features a Walk-Thru wizard that helps

you with each step of the creation process, offering helpful instructions for the various sections of your plan. In addition, OfficeReady lets you insert graphics, as well as linked financial data in the form of Excel worksheets, freely throughout your document.

Once your plan is completed, you can print it, e-mail it, or publish it as an Excel workbook or PowerPoint presentation. OfficeReady even lets you publish your plan to the Web

> as a personal home page on a Canonhosted site. This feature is invaluable, because it lets you distribute your business plan over the Internet, even if you have little or no experience with HTML.

Ultimately, OfficeReady provides a powerful business-plan authoring solution in an easy-to-use, familiar environment. Now all you need is that milliondollar idea. ---Richard Douek (Canon Software; \$89.95,

www.software.canon.com

Real Entertainment Center does a poor job of integrating them into one seamless product. For instance, RealJukebox supports WMA files, but RealPlayer does not. And though you can integrate AOL Instant Messenger 4 into Real-Player, you can't do the same with RealJukebox.

Ideally, RealNetworks should integrate all three of these programs into one distinct entertainment application. Until that time, however, you can download a free version of Real Entertainment Center-or each component programfrom the company's Web site. The free versions offer most of the functionality of the retail versions and may be all you need to set up your own entertainment -David English (RealNetworks; \$49.99; www.real.com)

ZDNet Price It! code Canon OfficeReady Business Plans 33829 Generations Grande Suite 8.0 33833 Real Entertainment Center Plus For real-time pricing, go to priceit.zdnet.com and enter number.





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Model P1645T: Intel® Pentium® III processor 800EB MHz / 128 MB RDRAM / 10 GB IDE HD / Matrox® G250 dual head AGP 4x / 48x max CD-ROM / HP 10/100 PCI LAN card / 3.5" floppy drive / Windows® 2000/Windows NT®





BACKYARD BASEBALL 2001 The Sandlot Goes Digital

aseball season may be winding down to the final innings, but with Humongous Entertainment's Backyard Baseball 2001, kids can find year-round enjoyment with the boys (and girls) of



summer. A baseball simulation designed for children between the ages of 5 and 12, Backyard Baseball provides plenty of customizable options, several modes of play, and Humongous' typically superb animation.

In addition to selecting their own team names and uniform colors, players can choose their favorites from all 30 Major League ball clubs. In addition, a Create a Player function lets youngsters join in the onscreen action by fashioning their own team member. Better still, kids get to play alongside junior versions of well-known ballplayers such as Mark McGwire, Mike Piazza, Sammy Sosa, and Mo Vaughn.

The game provides a rich variety of gameplay-including season play, in which young coaches face off for a

STAR TREK: KLINGON ACADEMY

14-game season; a batting practice mode; single games against the computer; and even spectator games that let you sit back and watch the computer play against itself. Kids can also play free online against other human opponents on the secure Humongous Sports Neighborhood service.

> Although we have some reservations about recommending the game for the kindergarten crowd (our 6-year-old tester had a rough time of it at the easy setting), we have no doubt that older childrenand more often than not, their parents-won't want to put it down. Once again, Humongous knocks one out of the park.

> > -Steve Schwartz

(Humongous Entertainment; \$19.99; www.humongous.com)

MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

* * (RATED 1 TO 5 STARS)

icrosoft Corp.'s much-debated approach to competition hasn't stopped the company from producing some terrific racing games. Case in point: Motocross Madness 2, which delivers more great motorcycle racing, jumping, and bone-crushing wipeouts.

If you enjoy arcade-style racing and don't mind dispensing with real-world physics, this is the game for you. Moto-

DIABLO II

A Devil of a Good Time

* * * * (RATED 1 TO 5 STARS)

lizzard Entertainment's Diablo became an instant classic upon its release in 1997. Now, after three-plus years and countless delays, the long-awaited sequel has arrived, and it doesn't disappoint.

Diablo II bears a striking resemblance to the original, albeit with some worthwhile improvements. Visually, it looks amazing, with dazzling new lighting and spell effects, and plenty of cartoonish gore. Alas, you're limited to playing at 640x480 resolution-a definite disappointment.

As in the original, you choose a character class (there are now five instead of three) and embark on vari-



ous treasure-seeking, monster-slaying quests. Among the best gameplay tweaks are randomized maps, a permanent storage chest for precious items, spells that can be assigned to function keys, and characters that can run. Blizzard's Battle.net multiplayer service has been improved as well. Although it still suffers some lag, the service has effectively eliminated the cheating that virtually ruined the original Diablo.

Diablo II's revamped save-game feature is a point of contention, however, You can't save without exiting the game, but when you return, you wind up back at home base. Meanwhile, all the monsters have regenerated, and the portal-like waypoint system simply returns you to the general vicinity of where you started.

That said, Diablo II is still a blast to play. Fans of the original might not find it quite as innovative as its predecessor, but that won't stop them from getting swept up all over again. -Rick Broida

(Blizzard Entertainment; \$59.95; www.blizzard.com)

cross Madness 2 lets you choose a cycle, dress your rider (in anything from jeans to leather), and compete in six different events: Baja, Stunts, Nationals, Supercross, and the new Enduro and Pro Circuit. Enduro challenges you to race on

taining a Klingon warship is simply

stick and numeric keyboard com-

art, but you rarely notice, thanks to some wonderful visu-

al effects (including burning hulls and leaking plasma

trails). Plus, the game's live-action sequences are noth-

thrilling. Using a combination of a joy-

theme-oriented tracks filled with traffic and "working" objects (such as trains and farm equipment), while Pro Circuit puts money on the line as you race for cash and bike upgrades.

Motocross Madness 2 looks as lush and dynamic as the original did in its day, with support for ultrahigh resolutions and nicely detailed scenery. Unfortunately, the game crashed repeatedly on a system with a Matrox G400 graphics card, and we found no support help on Microsoft's Web site. It did run properly with other cards, however.

As with most racing games, competing against yourself or other human players (on Microsoft's Zone.com) is far more enjoyable than tackling the computer opponents, which are unrealistically infallible. All told, Motocross Madness 2 is like cotton candy-a rush of sweetness, but ultimately not very filling. -R.B.(Microsoft Corp.; \$44.95; www.microsoft.com)

mands, you simultaneously pilot the vessel and control all ship systems, from propulsion to The year 2000 looks like it will be a good engineering to the cloaking device. Klingon Academy's graphics aren't quite state-of-the-



one for Star Trek games. Springtime brought us Activision's splendid Star Trek: Armada, and now Interplay has served up Star Trek:

The Heart of a Warrior

Klingon Academy—arguably the best Star Trek game to date, and an excellent space-combat simulator to boot.

As a young cadet in the Klingon Defense Forces Elite Command Academy you'll rise through the ranks by completing various story-driven missions, many of which involve Chancellor Gorkon and General Chang (roles reprised by David Warner and Christopher Plummer, respectively).

The experience of cap-



ing short of feature-film quality. If you'd rather skip the 25 lengthy, smartly designed missions, you can create some truly spectacular skirmishes (such as, say, one Klingon bird of prey against three Federation starships)

or venture online for multiplayer battles. Klingon Academy arrives on a whopping five CDs—a missed opportunity for Interplay to deliver a worthwhile game on DVD. That gripe aside, this is a must-have for Trekkers and spacecombat fans alike. (Interplay; \$49.99; www.interplay.com)

ZDNet Price It!	code
Backyard Baseball 2001	33834
Diablo II	33823
Motocross Madness 2	33836
Star Trek: Klingon Academy	33824
For real-time pricing, g	o to



Technology for Optimum Compactness Hyundai DeluxScan





For a tree, proper pruning and trimming not only makes it look good but also makes it stronger. In a sense, a computer monitor is the same. Hyundai's DeluxScan is a high quality compact design built around the concept of eliminating unnecessary parts and concentrating on what is really important. Thanks to our concentrated skill, Hyundai has even made DeluxScan's price compact. Isn't it time to make your life more compact?



























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BY RICK BROIDA

These five featherweight notebooks push the boundaries of portable potential.

or too long, business travelers have faced a Faustian bargain of either lugging along a hefty, full-featured notebook or getting by with a bare-bones, and often underpowered, subnotebook. But the latest bunch of ultraportable models offer a suitable compromise. These units pack powerful processors, roomy hard drives, and spacious screens but save pounds and bulk by opting for smaller batteries and external floppy and DVD-ROM or CD-ROM drives.

Indeed, while not intended to serve as desktop replacements, the five note-

books we gathered for this roundup have sufficient horsepower for conventional business-computing tasks. And because each weighs less than 4.5 pounds (battery included), you won't have to schedule an appointment with your chiropractor at the end of your trip.

The systems are thinner and more compact than average, too, though to widely varying degrees. Compaq's amazingly svelte Armada M300, for instance, measures just 0.9 inches thick and a mere 10.5 inches wide, while the comparatively hefty HP OmniBook 900 stands nearly 1.25 inches tall and measures more than 11.5 inches across.

< FACT FILE	>
Category Tested	Ultraportable Notebooks
Price Range as Tested	\$2,254 to \$3,398
Minimum Configuration	400MHz processor (any brand); 11.3-inch LCD screen; 64MB RAM; 6GB hard drive; under 4.5 pounds with battery
Companies Included	Compaq Computer Corp., Dell Computer Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co., IBM, Toshiba America Information Systems
Best	Compaq Armada M300: We wouldn't mind traveling with any of these portables, but the Armada is clearly our first choice. It's remarkably thin and offers a highly practical double-bay docking station, as well as built-in Ethernet support and respectable battery life.

These ultraportable systems also take different approaches to lightening your load. The Armada and IBM ThinkPad



570E 6AU rely on underbelly docking stations that add expansion ports, drive bays, and room for a second battery. The Dell Latitude LS and HP OmniBook, which have most of their expansion options built in, use external CD-ROM and floppy drives. The Toshiba Portégé 3440CT, meanwhile, falls somewhere in between, with a large external module that combines a drive bay with a variety of expansion ports.

There are, of course, benefits and shortcomings to each approach, as we point out in the following individual product reviews. Perhaps the most important factor to bear in mind is battery life. The ThinkPad, for instance, one of the largest portables in the group, turned in the shortest battery time on our BatteryMark test. The much more

petite Latitude LS, meanwhile, managed to run nearly an hour longer.

Speaking of tests, only the Toshiba Portégé was able to complete our 3D WinBench 2000 suite, due to its cutting-edge S3 Savage IX graphics accelerator. The other systems failed 3D WinBench, owing to outdated video drivers, older graphics processors, or both. If you're hoping to play games in your downtime, look for a notebook with an ATI Rage Mobility or S3 Savage chip set and at least 4MB of memory.

One might expect to find small, lowresolution screens on notebooks weighing under 4.5 pounds, but the average display size was a roomy 12.1 inches. Only the Portégé's screen was smaller, at 11.3 inches, but even that seemed adequate for tasks like word processing and Web

browsing. The ThinkPad pushed the envelope with its eye-pleasing 13.3-inch display.

Just because a notebook has a diminutive frame doesn't mean it lacks expandability. All five systems have at least one USB port and PC Card slot; two also provide built-in Ethernet support. Two of the notebooks have DVD-ROM drives as well-handy when you want to watch your own in-flight movie. (Headphones are a must, however, as wimpy speakers are indigenous to the category.)

It's also gratifying to see that all five vendors offer 24/7 toll-free technical support, although we'd prefer to see threeyear warranties across the board as well. The Armada and Portégé are backed for only one year, so check out their extended warranties to protect your investment.

COMPAQ ARMADA M300 * * *

PROS: Fast 600MHz processor; small, lightweight case; large 12GB hard drive; excellent modular design

CONS: One-year warranty; slow application performance; lack of bundled applications; relatively small keyboard



Boasting a leading-edge design, rock-solid performance, and the fastest processor in the group, the Compaq Armada M300

quickly qualifies as a popular choice for power users on the move. It's also one of the smallest units here, measuring a scant 0.9x10.5x9.5 inches (HWD) and weighing just 3.4 pounds with its battery attached.

Given its pack-leading 600MHz Pentium III processor, it's no surprise that the Armada turned in above-average benchmark scores, but it was bested by most of the other systems in the comprehensive Business Winstone 99 test. While it may have the fastest processor, it's not necessarily the fastest performer.

The Armada's modularity, however, is truly remarkable. Its tube-shaped external battery, for instance, hooks easily onto the

ULTRAPORTABLE NOTEBOOKS

rear of the unit and can pivot 90 degrees to become a stand (and to expose the rear expansion ports) when you're working at a desk. Alternately, you can drop the Armada onto its optional underbelly docking station, which duplicates the expansion ports, adds line-in and line-out audio jacks, and supplies two drive bays. The latter can accommodate a secondary battery and a variety of drives, including floppy, CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, SuperDisk LS-120, and hard drives. The docking station costs \$399 with a CD-ROM drive or \$499 with a DVD-ROM.

Our review unit came with a floppy drive (included in the purchase price and also able to plug into the notebook's parallel port) and a DVD-ROM, bringing the total weight of the docking bay to just 2.5 pounds, still light enough to keep in your travel bag.

Even without the dock, the Armada has

Compaq Armada M300 virtually everything you need for road duty, including a 12GB hard drive, a V.90 modem, an Ethernet adapter, one USB port, and a Type II PC Card slot. Based on our tests, you can expect at least 2 hours of work time from the external battery.

reference

As we've seen in other recent Compaq notebooks, the M300 includes four programmable extra buttons that can be used to quick-launch your browser, e-mail program, or any other software. Its keyboard, while a bit smaller than most of the others

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	Compaq Armada M300	Dell Latitude LS H400ST	HP OmniBook 900	IBM ThinkPad 570E 6AU	Toshiba Portégé 3440CT
BASE PRICE	\$2,899 Best	\$2,402	\$1,999	\$3,094	\$2,199
DPTIONAL COSTS	\$499 (docking station with DVD-ROM drive)	\$99 (CD-ROM drive)	\$255 (CD-ROM drive)	\$244 (docking station with CD-ROM drive)	\$778 (port replicator and DVD-ROM drive)
TOTAL PRICE AS TESTED	\$3,398	\$2,501	\$2,254	\$3,338	\$2,977
CONFIGURATION Processor	600MHz Pentium III	400MHz Pentium III	450MHz Pentium III	500MHz Pentium III	500MHz Pentium III
SDRAM Installed/Maximum*	64MB/320MB	128MB/256MB	64MB/320MB	128MB/320MB	64MB/192MB
Dimensions (HWD, Inches)	0.9x10.5x9.5	1x10.7x8.7	1.25x11.8x8.8	1.1x11.8x9.4	0.8x10.3x9.1
System Weight/Travel Weight** (Pounds)	3.4/6.5	3.5/5.8	4.0/6.5	4.0/6.9	3.4/4.1
TFT Screen Size (Inches)/Native Resolution	12.1/1,024x768	12.1/800x600	12.1/800x600	13.3/1,024x768	11.3/1,024x768
Graphics Accelerator/RAM Installed	ATI Rage LT Pro/4MB	NeoMagic MagicMedia 256AV/2.5MB	ATI Rage Mobility/4MB	NeoMagic MagicMedia 256AV/2.5MB	S3 Savage IX/8MB
Hard Drive Rated Size/Manufacturer/rpm*	12GB/IBM/4,200	6GB/IBM/4,200	6GB/IBM/4,200	12GB/IBM/4,200	6GB/Toshiba/4,200
Docking-Station/Port-Replicator Option*	Yes/yes	No/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	No/yes
Manufacturer/Rated Speed/CD-ROM or DVD-ROM Drive	Toshiba/8x/DVD-ROM	Toshiba/24x/CD-ROM	Toshiba/24x/CD-ROM	IBM/24x/CD-ROM	Toshiba/6x/DVD-ROM
DVD Decoder Software	Compag DVD Express	NA	NA	NA	Mediamatics DVDExpress
Sound Processor*	Compaq PremierSound	NeoMagic MagicMedia 256 Audio	ESS Maestro	Sound Blaster Pro	Yamaha YMF752
Built-In Modem/Ethernet	Yes/ves	Yes/ves	No/no	Yes/no	Yes/no
Pointing Device	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad and pointing stick	Pointing stick	Pointing stick
Ports***	One parallel, one serial, one VGA, one USB, one IR	One parallel, one VGA, one PS/2, one USB	One parallel, one serial, one VGA, one USB, one IR, one PS/2	One parallel, one serial, one VGA, one USB, one PS/2, one IR	One VGA, one USB, one IR
Audio Connectors	Headphone, microphone	Headphone, microphone	Line out, microphone, headphone	Line out, microphone, headphone	Headphone, microphone
PC Card Slots	One Type II	One Type II	Two Type II	Two Type II	Two Type II
ncludes Carrying Case	No	No	No	No	No
Max. Number of Installed Batteries	One	One	One	One	Two
Rated Battery Charge Time with System Off/On (Hours)	2/2	1.5/1.5	1.5/1.5	2.5/3	3/4
SOFTWARE INCLUDED	Windows 98 Second Edition, RingCentral Fax	Windows 98 Second Edition	Windows 98 Second Edition, McAfee VirusScan	Windows 98 Second Edition, Lotus SmartSuite Millennium, Norton Mobile Essentials, Norton AntiVirus, RingCentral Fax, ConfigSafe, IBM Update Connector, PC-Doctor	Windows 98 Second Edition, RingCentral Fax
SERVICE AND SUPPORT*				Í	
Money-Back Guarantee/Restocking Fee	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no	NA/NA
Standard Warranty (Parts and Labor)	One year	Three years	Three years	Three years	One year
Extended/Upgraded Warranties	\$149 for three years onsite	\$169 for CompleteCare upgrade	\$199 for two years onsite	\$49 for one year onsite	\$79 for one year onsite
Live Toll-Free Tech-Support Hours	24 hours daily	24 hours daily	24 hours daily	24 hours daily	24 hours daily
Online Tech Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Vendor both ways				

NA = Not applicable * = According to vendor or manufacturer ** = Includes weight of floppy drive, CD/DVD drive, and AC adapter

*** = Ports on notebook only; additional ports may be found on port replicators/docking stations

in the group, felt surprisingly comfortable.

The Armada's only real shortcomings are its price—a total of \$3,398 for the system and the docking station—and its lack of bundled software. Save for RingCentral Fax, the only software included is Windows 98 (or Windows 2000, if you prefer). Nevertheless, the Armada M300 is a smartly designed notebook that's sure to please weight-weary travelers.

DELL LATITUDE LS H400ST * * *

PROS: Three-year warranty with next-business-day onsite service; compact, lightweight design; good application performance CONS: No serial port; below-average graphics performance

ou can't judge a notebook by its processor, as evidenced by the Dell Latitude LS H400ST, which has a base price of \$2,402. Though equipped with a 400MHz Pentium III CPU—assumed to be the slowest in the roundup—the system achieved second-place Business Disk WinMark and Business Winstone scores, helped along by its 128MB of SDRAM. Not bad for a system that weighs just 3.5 pounds and measures only an inch thick.

Indeed, the Latitude is a decidedly travel-friendly portable—if your travel plans don't include floppy or CD-ROM drives. Both are external, plugging into the notebook's parallel and expansion ports, respectively, and requiring extra room around the notebook. (The floppy drive can also swap into the plastic case that houses the optional \$99 24x CD-ROM that was included with our configuration.) Using either drive while balancing the Latitude on your lap or an airplane tray table would be difficult at best.

Moving toward a legacy-free design, the Latitude has no serial port—a potential problem for users of digital cameras, handheld PCs, and other peripherals. It also lacks an IR port but has the more important PS/2 and USB connectors. A V.90 modem, an Ethernet adapter, and a Type II PC Card slot are standard equipment, as are the 800x600-pixel 12.1-inch TFT screen and 6GB hard drive. (You can upgrade to a drive that's twice as big for a mere \$70.)

While the Latitude produced aboveaverage benchmark scores overall, its NeoMagic graphics chip earned very low marks. This notebook may not be the best choice for graphics-minded users, but at least it won't peter out in the middle of a spreadsheet: Its battery lasted nearly 2.5 hours in our rundown test.

The Latitude features a large, comfortable keyboard and touch pad, but its cursor-control keys are inconveniently

ULTRAPORTABLE NOTEBOOKS

spread out. Some quick-launch and autoscroll buttons would be welcome.

Dell's Web site makes it surprisingly difficult to locate the Latitude, which is in the Small Business Center, but not the Home Office area. Once you've reached the configuration screen, however, you'll find a wealth of customization and accessory options. The one noticeable omission is a DVD-ROM drive;

only a CD-ROM is available. For an **Dell Latitude** LS H400ST extra \$85, you can opt for Windows 2000; for an extra \$274, you can own Office 2000

ties come bundled with the system. Dell's exemplary warranty covers parts and labor for three years and includes next-

Small Business. Those are your only soft-

ware options, and no applications or utili-

business-day onsite service. The optional CompleteCare upgrade includes coverage for accidental damage (like drops and spills). Though the Latitude LS doesn't stand out with any particularly impressive features, it's a slim and likable notebook at a reasonable price.

(Note: As we went to press, we received word that Dell had upgraded the processor of the Latitude LS H400ST to a 500MHz Pentium III. Everything else about the system, including the price, remains unchanged.)

HP OMNIBOOK 900 ★ ★ ★

PROS: Low price; three-year warranty; large, comfortable keyboard; good software bund

CONS: Bulky, heavy case; slow application performance; lacks modem and Ethernet support

lthough HP's OmniBook 900 is the thickest and slowest notebook in this group (not to mention one of the heaviest), it is also the least expensive, with a base price of just \$1,999. The OmniBook weighs 4 pounds and stands 1.25 inches tall, making it seem like a behemoth next to the lilliputian Compaq Armada M300 and Toshiba Portégé 3440CT. Indeed, it looks and feels more like a traditional notebook than an ultraportable, but it makes the cut due to its reasonably light weight.

Built with a 450MHz Pentium III processor, 64MB of RAM, and a 6GB hard drive, the OmniBook turned in the lowest Business Winstone score of the five systems here and mostly below-average scores on our other tests. Fortunately, its ATI Rage Mobility-based graphics subsystem saved

Tools of the Road

Ithough today's notebooks come packed with more capabilities than ever, there's always room to accessorize. These three items can make the trip a bit easier for any road warrior.

MOBILITY EASIDOCK USB 200E (www.easidock.com)

Though most notebooks have serial, parallel, and USB ports, very few have more than one of each. Enter Mobility Electronics' EasiDock USB 200E, a \$150 peripheral that supplies one serial, one parallel, one Ethernet, two PS/2, and five USB ports-all with a single USB connection. With that kind of expandability, virtually any notebook can double as a desktop system.

NESCO SMARTADAPTER PLUS

(www.nescobatteries.com)

Finding an AC outlet for your notebook is no mean feat when you're cruising at 35,000 feet or stuck in the back of a cab.

But Nesco Battery Systems' \$80 Smart-Adapter Plus comes with the adapters you need to plug into any 12-volt DC outlet, be it in a plane, train, boat, or car.

NEW MEDIA MOBILE GAMER

(www.newmediatechcorp.com)

It's the rare notebook that has a joystick port-a problem if you're in the mood to kick back with your favorite game at the end of the day. Fortunately, most notebooks have at least one PC Card slot, and that's where New Media Technology Corp.'s Mobile Gamer comes into play. This Type II PC Card sells for about \$60 and supplies connectors for one four-axis joystick or two two-axis joysticks. It even supports force-feedback controllers.

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Mobility EasiDock USB 200E	33846
Nesco SmartAdapter Plus	33847
New Media Mobile Gamer	33848

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the day with strong performance, making the OmniBook an acceptable platform for business-graphics software and even games.

Like the Dell Latitude, the OmniBook relies on external floppy and CD-ROM drives. HP OmniBook

The floppy is included; the 24x CD-ROM drive costs an additional \$255. Unlike the Latitude's, the drives can't be used simultaneously; both vie for space in the included external module bay (which can also accommodate a DVD-ROM, LS-120, or Zip drive).

The OmniBook was one of three notebooks included here to arrive without builtin Ethernet support, and the only one that lacked a modem. It does have a pair of Type II PC Card slots, so you can add both options with relative ease. (All the other standard expansion ports are here as well, including USB and PS/2.) And while we think the omission of a modem borders on sacrilege, it's hard to argue with the notebook's total price of \$2,254-by far the lowest in the group.

One benefit to the OmniBook's larger form factor is its full-size, full-comfort keyboard with properly arranged cursor-control keys. The OmniBook supplies both a point-

ULTRAPORTABLE NOTEBOOKS

ing stick and a touch pad, and they can operate simultaneously (so you can instantly switch back and forth between them).

It takes a few clicks to drill through HP's online shopping area and find the OmniBook 900, which is available with a variety of additions and upgrades. But the DVD-ROM and Zip drives were inexplicably missing from the accessory list, and the overall shopping-cart system was nowhere near as polished as Compaq's or Dell's, for instance.

HP backs the OmniBook with a generous three-year warranty and supplies virus-scanning, system-diagnostic, and online-help software. While there are thinner, lighter, and better-equipped portables in the group, if you want to travel reasonably light while keeping your investment to a minimum, the OmniBook 900 may be the answer.

IBM THINKPAD 570€ 6AU ★ ★

PROS: Large 12GB hard drive; 13.3-inch screen; superior application performance; comfortable keyboard; good software bundle

CONS: Poor battery performance; thick, heavy case; bulky docking

lthough it's one of the biggest and heaviest systems included here, the IBM ThinkPad 570E 6AU comes with amenities such as a big screen, a large 12GB hard drive, and lots of software. These luxuries do not come cheaply, however-at \$3,094, the ThinkPad also has the highest base price.

By itself, the 500MHz Pentium IIIpowered ThinkPad tips the scales at 4 pounds and measures just over an inch

thick. It's also a briefcase-compro-

mising 9.4 inches deep, lending an unusually big feel to the notebook. The source of the extra depth is the 13.3-inch TFT screen, the largest display here.

The included external floppy drive can plug into the notebook or slide inside the optional \$115 UltraBase docking station. This underbelly accessory sports a second battery bay, two drive bays, a joystick port (a rare find in any notebook), and a second USB port. The drive bays can hold a CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, Zip, or second hard drive; ours came with a 24x CD-ROM.

Versatile though it may be, the UltraBase turns the ThinkPad into a mammoth that's



and weighs nearly 7 pounds. We wouldn't want to lug this thing onto a plane. But the second battery would definitely come in handy. While the ThinkPad proved to be a top performer, turning in the highest Business Winstone score, it had the worst battery life. It was the only notebook in the group that didn't make it past 2 hours—in fact, it barely exceeded 1.5 hours.

Users who do a lot of word processing will appreciate the ThinkPad's desktop-caliber keyboard, the largest and most comfortable we laid hands on. Alas, it still lacks something as basic as a Windows key, and that's part of a

bigger problem: its staid design. The ThinkPad line looks virtually the same now as it did three years ago-no quicklaunch or auto-scroll buttons, no CD-playback controls, no recent design innovations whatsoever.

Also, IBM continues to

HIGHER SCORES ARE BETTER	Compaq Rest Armada M300	Dell Latitude LS H400ST	HP OmniBook 900	IBM ThinkPad 570E 6AU	Toshiba Portégé 3440CT	Benchmark System Quantex W-1511
PROCESSOR TYPE	600MHz Pentium III	400MHz Pentium III	450MHz Pentium III	500MHz Pentium III	500MHz Pentium III	500MHz Pentium III
SYSTEM MEMORY	64MB	128MB	64MB	128MB	64MB	128MB
NATIVE RESOLUTION	1,024x768	800x600	800x600	1,024x768	1,024x768	1,024x768
APPLICATION PERFORMANCE Business Winstone 99 65,536 Colors @ Native Resolution	19.2	21.0	19.0	21.7	21.0	22.8
BATTERY LIFE BatteryMark 3.0 (hours:minutes)	2:10	2:20	2:23	1:34	2:50	3:13
PROCESSOR SUBSYSTEM CPUmark 99	55.2	38.1	42.3	47.1	47.8	47.2
GRAPHICS SUBSYSTEM Business Graphics WinMark 99 65,536 Colors @ Native Resolution 16.8 Million Colors @ Native Resolution	159 94.6	111 69.1	162 132	170 53.4	161 101	167 127
3D WinMark 2000 65,536 Colors @ 640x480 65,536 Colors @ 800x600	NA NA	NA NA	NA NA	NA NA	36.0 26.6	18.9 15.0
DISK SUBSYSTEM Business Disk WinMark 99	2,170	2,240	1,950	2,360	2,020	2,090

bundle Lotus SmartSuite, a powerful though generally less desirable office suite. We suspect most users would rather have no suite at all and pay a bit less. Other bundled software includes Norton Mobile Essentials, Norton AntiVirus, and RingCentral Fax, all welcome applications.

It takes a lot of clicking to find the ThinkPad 570E on IBM's Web site. The configuration screen offers few customization options (RAM, yes; hard drive, no), but does list dozens of accessories. With its high price, subpar battery life, and excessive bulk, the ThinkPad 570E 6AU merits consideration only for those who insist on a large screen.

TOSHIBA PORTÉGÉ 3440CT ★ ★ ★

PROS: Low base price; good battery life; thin, lightweight case; superior 3D-graphics performance; good application performance

CONS: Expensive port replicator and DVD drive; small screen; one-year warranty; inferior pointing stick and keyboard; awkward mouse-button arrangement

ith a base price of \$2,199, the Toshiba Portégé 3440CT seems like a great deal—until you add the pricey port replicator (\$399) and DVD-ROM drive (\$379), both of which were included with our review system. Together, they bump the total cost up to \$2,977.

Price notwithstanding, it's hard not to like the Portégé, if only because it's so amazingly thin (0.8 inches) and light (3.4 pounds). That compactness belies the respectable horsepower within: a 500MHz Pentium III processor and a state-of-the-art S3 Savage IX graphics accelerator.

The graphics accelerator was the only one in the roundup to complete our 3D WinMark 2000 tests successfully, and it blew the doors off our baseline system's scores. Whether you're into 3D modeling or Quake III, the Portégé lets you do your thing. The rest of the Portégé's scores were similarly on the high side, and the DVD-ROM drive topped the chart in the CD-ROM WinMark 99 test.

The notebook ruled the BatteryMark test, too, but there's a caveat: We were unable to disable Toshiba's built-in power-management utility, and while we did tailor its settings to match the test's requirements,

we can't be positive they functioned like Windows' own power settings. In other words, your mileage may vary.

From an expansion standpoint, the Portégé supplies just the essentials: a

ULTRAPORTABLE NOTEBOOKS

pair of Type II PC Card slots, a 56Kbps modem, SVGA and USB ports, and headphone and microphone jacks. If you need parallel, serial, PS/2, or Ethernet connections, you'll find them on the included LAN Port Replicator, which also supplies an additional USB port. These same ports and more are duplicated on the optional Multimedia Port Replicator, which also provides the necessary drive bay for the DVD-ROM drive. Problem is, this replicator is thicker than the Portégé and almost as heavy. Using it anywhere but on a desk would be a major inconvenience.

We also disliked the Portégé's pointing stick, which we found stiff and too deeply recessed. And the keyboard was the worst in the group, with its surprisingly shallow keys. But the biggest disappointment came from the mouse-button arrangement. There's a side-by-side pair below the space bar, which, inexplicably, scroll up and down in documents and Web pages, and a stacked pair



The whole setup seems illogical and is awkward to use.

Toshiba supplies just one piece of software (RingCentral Fax) and a one-year warranty. Though you can buy Portégé accessories online, Toshiba doesn't sell the notebook itself online, so there are no customization options to speak of.

Add to it all the smallest screen in the group—11.3 inches—and the

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Portégé comes up wanting. The featherweight frame is definitely a delight, but Compaq's similarly buoyant Armada offers smarter design and a better value.

LESS WEIGHT, MORE FILLING

f you've longed to bid goodbye to boat-anchor notebooks, now's the time. These back-friendly bantam-weights weigh upwards of 70 percent less than some portables we've seen, yet offer surprisingly few compromises in terms of performance and expandability. Sure, you might have to live with a 12-inch screen and settle for 2 hours of battery life

instead of 4 (always pack a spare cell), but these are small prices to pay for the business traveler looking to lighten the load significantly.

As you shop, keep in mind that not all notebook manufacturers excel at making ultraportable notebooks. Toshiba and IBM, for instance, usually hit the ball out of the park, but their latest efforts went foul. Compaq and Dell, on the other hand, served up better notebooks at comparable prices, and that's the combination we think most users would prefer. \blacktriangledown

ZDNet Price It!™	code
Compaq Armada M300	33837
Dell Latitude LS H400ST	33838
HP OmniBook 900	33839
IBM ThinkPad 570E 6AU	33840
Toshiba Portégé 3440CT	33841

< PRODUCT	SUMMARY>				
RATED 1 TO 5 STARS	*** Best	****	***	***	***
SYSTEM	Compaq Armada M300	Dell Latitude LS H400ST	HP OmniBook 900	IBM ThinkPad 570E 6AU	Toshiba Portégé 3440CT
COMPANY	Compaq Computer Corp. Houston, TX 800-888-9909 www.compaq.com	Dell Computer Corp. Round Rock, TX 800-388-8542 www.dell.com	Hewlett-Packard Co. Palo Alto, CA 800-322-4772 www.hp.com	IBM Research Triangle Park, NC 800-426-7255 www.ibm.com/pc/us	Toshiba America Information Systems Irvine, CA 800-867-4422 www.toshiba.com
BASE PRICE (MFR. EST.)	\$2,899	\$2,402 (direct)	\$1,999	\$3,094	\$2,199
PRICE AS TESTED	\$3,398	\$2,501 (direct)	\$2,254	\$3,338	\$2,977

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Sony FD85/FD90	619/709
Sony DSCS 30/50	439/534
Sony DSC\$70	719

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RDC 6000		359
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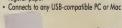
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SCANING FOR SAUMES

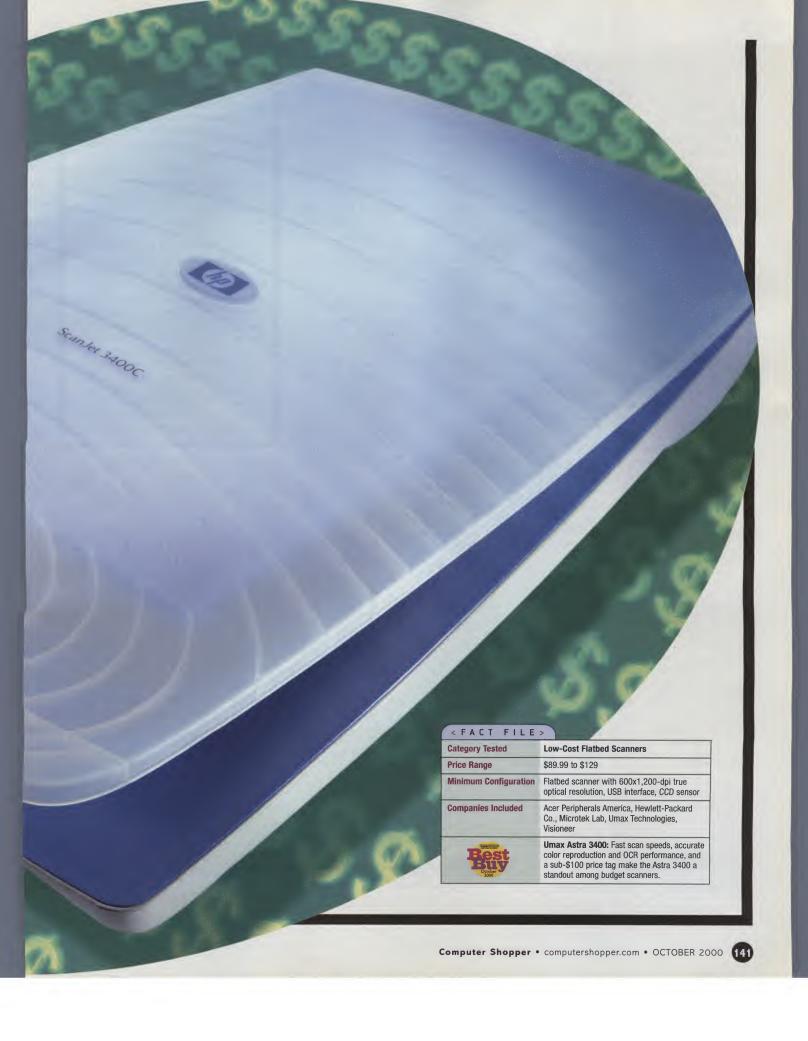
With prices hovering around the \$100 mark, these five flatbed scanners cut costs but not corners.

by Bill Dyszel

These days, you can pick

up a decent scanner for about as much as you'd spend on dinner for two at a moderately priced restaurant. In addition to being easily available, most new scanners are even easier to use. Good thing, too, since people are using them for just about everything from sharing photos with friends and family to archiving personal documents.





This newfound ease of use is scanner manufacturers' response to consumer demands for hassle-free setups and a way to avoid selecting from a range of options each time they scan. As a result, the current crop of scanners require no more operating skill than the ability to push a button.

We looked at five major-brand flatbed scanners priced at less than \$130. Now that USB is a standard feature on new computers, we decided to limit our tests to scanners that use USB rather than the older parallel-port connection. USB provides superior speed, vastly simplifies the installation process, and eliminates the possibility of problems caused by parallelport resource conflicts. The five units reviewed here let you easily execute the most popular scanner functions and are equipped with buttons that provide onetouch access to e-mail, optical character recognition (OCR), or simple photo scanning. Although the time it took us to scan a single document ranged from about 30 seconds to 2 minutes, we found all of these scanners to be reasonably easy to set up and use.

All of the scanners reviewed here acquire images using charge-coupled device (CCD) technology rather than contact image sensor (CIS) technology. Overall, CCDs are more sensitive to light

FLATBED SCANNERS

and render clearer images.

It should also be noted that these five scanners are targeted squarely at the entrylevel consumer. If you want a scanner for professional use, these same manufacturers offer a range of products with more sophisticated features at higher prices. But for around a hundred bucks, any of these units will fill the bill quite nicely for home users.

ACER 640BU **

PROS: Top-quality color reproduction; superior OCR performance CONS: Tricky installation; confusing function keys; lack of confirmation for some functions

lthough the Acer 640BU had the best OCR performance of the group, it's not the most consumer-friendly unit we've run across. Installation of the \$97.99-estimated scanner required quite a bit of tooling around with drivers, and the software installation demanded a bit of detective work as well. Two or three years ago, we would have expected to wrestle with this type of installation program, but all of the other entries in our roundup found ways to simplify the installation and operation of their products.

Once you've figured out how to use the utility programs that come with the Acer 640BU, you'll have even more control over

How We Tested

Il five scanners were tested on a 266MHz Pentium II Gateway system equipped with 96MB of RAM under Windows 98 Second Edition. We used the system's built-in USB port to connect each of the scanners. Each scanner was tested on a freshly rewritten image of the system's hard drive, containing only the drivers for the scanner being tested. Our test printer was an Epson Stylus Photo 870.

In our Timed Image Acquisition test, we scanned a standard Kodak photo three times; the results were averaged to see how quickly each product could process an image using the standard consumer settings. We then scanned samples of single- and three-column text to measure the accuracy of the bundled OCR packages. For the final test, we scanned the test photo at each scanner's highest available resolution and printed the file using Adobe Photoshop. We then submitted the unidentified results to a threemember jury, which judged the quality and accuracy of each image. V

functions like color depth, gamma correction, and other details that may be important to graphics professionals (but not so significant for home users). Another slightly confusing but useful detail is the way each

< FEATURE COMPARISON >

	Acer 640BU	HP ScanJet 3400C	Microtek ScanMaker 3700	Umax Astra 3400	Visioneer 6200 USB
MFR. EST. PRICE	\$97.99	\$129	\$119.99 (list)	\$99 Buy	\$89.99
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS					
Maximum Scan Area (Inches)	8.5x11	8.5x11.7	8.5x11.7	8.5x11.7	8.5x11.7
Maximum Color Depth (Bits)	42	42	42	42	42
One-Touch Scanning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chassis Dimensions (HWD, Inches)	3.5x12x19	3.7x12x19.5	4.6x11.4x20	2.6x11.6x18.2	3.7x10.5x16.7
Parallel-Port Interface	No	Yes	No	No	No
Automatic Document Feeder	No	No	No	No	Optional
Transparency Adapter	No	No	Yes	No	No
OPERATIONAL FEATURES					
600x1,200-dpi True Optical Resolution	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zoom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Batch Scan	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Rotate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Blur	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Sharpen	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Edge-Enhancement Feature	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
BUNDLED SOFTWARE					
TWAIN Driver	MiraScan	HP	Microtek ScanWizard 5.10	Umax VistaScan	Visioneer Scan Manager 262
Image-Editing Software	Kai Photo Soap 2, Ulead Photo Express 3	Adobe ActiveShare	Adobe PhotoDeluxe	Adobe PhotoDeluxe	MGI PhotoSuite II SE
OCR Software	ABBYY FineReader	HP PrecisionScan LTX	OmniPage LE	OmniPage LE	TextBridge Pro 8
Document-Management Software	Presto PageManager Deluxe	None	PageKeeper	Presto PageManager	PaperPort Deluxe
Other Applications	PhotoGenetics	ArcSoft PhotoFantasy, ArcSoft PhotoMontage, ScanJet Copy Utility, Trellix Web	Adobe Acrobat Reader, Kodak Digital Science Color Management, Trellix Web Microtek Edition, Ulead Photolmpact	NewSoft PageType, Umax VistaShuttle	PictureWorks PhotoEnhancer, WebPublisher Link
SERVICE AND SUPPORT					
Standard Warranty (Parts and Labor)	One year	90 days	One year	One year	One year
Toll-Free Technical Support	Yes	No	No	No	No
Technical-Support Hours	24 hours daily	6 a.m. to 6 p.m. M-F (MT)	7 a.m. to 7 p.m. M-F, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sa-Su (PT)	7 a.m. to 9 p.m. M-F, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sa (MT)	8 a.m. to 5 p.m. M-F (PT)
Online Technical Support	E-mail, Web	E-mail, Web	E-mail, Web	E-mail, Web	E-mail, Web

of the scanner's three operating buttons can handle two different functions; one function launches when you press the button quickly, and the other launches when you hold the button down for two seconds.

SCANNERS

choice for users who don't know if their computer supports USB, as well as for

LOWER SCORES ARE BETTER	Acer 640BU	HP ScanJet 3400C	Microtek ScanMaker 3700	Umax Buy Astra 3400	Visioneer 6200 USB
TIMED IMAGE ACQUISITION TEST 300x300 dpi Time to Prescan (Minutes:Seconds)	00:11.27	00.40.50	01.40.51		00.00.11
Time to Prescan (Minutes:Seconds)	00:11.27	00:19.50 01:26.84	01:48.51 01:56.26	NA* 00:26.21	00:23.11
OCR TEST Single Column (Number of Errors)	1	26	3	3	29

Oddly, some functions, such as OCR, execute in a background process on your PC, without providing any indication that they actually worked.

Nevertheless, Acer was our handsdown winner for OCR accuracy. Even our fiendish three-column OCR test page emerged almost flawlessly from ABBYY FineReader, the OCR program bundled with the unit. This task utterly flummoxed three of the four other scanners we tested. The 640BU was also among the best performers in rendering our sample color photos, with good skin tones and even color across the spectrum.

Although the Acer 640BU has its problems, you may be able to overlook them in view of its low price and good performance.

HP SCANJET 3400C ★★★★

PROS: Dual USB and parallel-port interfaces; stylish blue case; easy-to-use controls; excellent color-photo scanning

CONS: Difficulty with three-column OCR test

ewlett-Packard combines the best of the old and new with the HP ScanJet 3400C by including both parallel and USB connections. This makes for a simple connectivity

owners of older systems that probably only have a parallelport connection. The three operating

buttons on the scanner's case are set up to launch scanning, copying, and e-mail programs without requiring you to use the

page into a graphic. The ScanJet excelled on our color-photo scanning tests, however. In fact, the unit's reproduction abilities were among the best of all the units reviewed here, with rich hues and subtle differences in contrast clearly displayed. The scanner automatically distinguishes color items from black and white, and adjusts them accordingly.

The ScanJet's translucent blue cover also makes for a welcome fashion statement, though Martha Stewart would probably frown on the choice of blue as the only color available. Still, HP was the only vendor of the five to realize that many consumers choose a product just because they like the color.

With an estimated price of \$129, the



Acer 640BU and HP ScanJet 3400C

desktop computer.

The HP PrecisionScan software that came with the ScanJet did a respectable job with our one-column OCR test page, but it converted our entire three-column test

HP ScanJet 3400C is the most expensive unit included here. It may not be the best all-round performer for the price, but it boasts an excellent design and can be used with both older and newer systems.

Scan Samples



MICROTEK SCANMAKER 3700 ★★★★

PROS: Includes slide attachment; dual-platform support (Windows and Mac)

CONS: Cumbersome software installation

A lthough it's one of the higher-priced units here, the \$119.99-list Microtek ScanMaker 3700 is the only one that includes an attachment for scanning slides and filmstrips. Slide scanning is a task that appeals to graphics professionals more than the average consumer, and the same could be said for the ScanMaker 3700 itself.

Microtek has apparently attempted to offer something for everyone in its design of the ScanMaker, which includes both a simplified preset-style interface for the scanning software, as well as a group of advanced settings. The scanner and its software are also designed to work with both Windows and Macintosh systems (Windows 98 or later, and Mac OS 8.6 or later).

FLATBED SCANNERS

The three buttons on the ScanMaker's case are identified by icons, not text, which can leave you guessing as to each button's function. The buttons are programmable with one of the software utilities bundled with the scanner. This provides a great amount of flexibility. You can direct the output of a scanning job to any program installed on your desktop computer with the touch of a single button—provided, of course, that you remember which button is which.

Installing the ScanMaker 3700 isn't difficult, but the software installation isn't totally seamless. The CD that comes with the unit includes 10 software packages, and you have to install each of them separately. Unfortunately, you won't find an option to install everything at once. That's not a seri-

ous obstacle for even a modestly experienced user, but a neophyte might require a bit of help during the installation process.

UMAX ASTRA 3400 ★★★★

PROS: Outstanding ease of use; excellent OCR performance; fast scanning speed

CONS: None



The \$99-estimated Umax Astra 3400 was the fastest and best-balanced scanner of the group. The Astra 3400

features four case-mounted operating buttons, which are conveniently labeled in English for the icon-impaired. Three of the buttons are dedicated to specific functions: launching your e-mail program, scanning to file, and powering on and off. The fourth is a user-programmable button that lets you quickly perform a single task of your choice.

The bundled ScanSoft OmniPage LE OCR software generated an excellent

10

Tips for Savvy Scanning

ost new flatbed scanners are so easy to use, you could probably operate one with the touch of a single button. But while the scanning process may not be all that challenging, there are some basic rules you can follow to maximize your scanner's potential.

WEB WARNINGS
If you're scanning pictures of the kids to post on the Internet for Grandma to see, remember that you only need a 72-dpi resolution for this particular task. That's far below

the 1,200-dpi resolution that all of the scanners in our roundup can deliver.

are available.

All of the scanners reviewed here ship with scaled-down image-editing software for touching up scanned photos. If you want the broadest range of creative tools for altering your scanned images, however, consider upgrading to the full versions of these packages. Adobe Photoshop, one of the most advanced image-editing programs, sells for about \$600—although less expensive choices

CLEAN UP YOUR IMAGES

If you want to use a scanner to help reduce your typing load, take advantage of the OCR package that comes with your unit. (In most cases, it's the "light" version of ScanSoft—formerly Caere—OmniPage, one of

the most popular OCR programs on the market.) But when you start scanning large volumes of documents, you may want to upgrade to OmniPage Pro, which costs about \$100, or another full-featured OCR package.

MANAGE THOSE DOCUMENTS
Archiving documents is a specialty unto itself, and the document-management programs included with most scanners can help you store and find your files quickly and safely. Each package tends to have a specialty, either the ability to save an unusually large number of files, maximum security, or powerful search functions. Familiar names in the document-management business include Pagis Pro,

Some scanners let you adjust the number of colors that the unit can detect, also known as the color depth. Increasing the color depth usually yields truer, richer colors; of course, this also means it takes a lot longer to finish the scan. If you just want to scan material

PaperPort, and TextBridge.

KEEP SMALL RESOLUTIONS
Although all of the scanners we tested yield resolutions up to 600x1,200 dpi, you may not need that level of quality for everything you scan. Pictures scanned at very high resolutions yield very large files. (Our test photo was scanned at the top resolution supported by

faster, set the color depth to a lower setting.

each scanner, and the resulting files each took up nearly 100MB of disk space.)

WHAT'S IN THE MAIL?
When e-mailing images, remember to keep the resolution low to expedite the sending process.

Even if you're conservative with resolutions and color depths, you can use up a lot of disk space if you get trigger-happy with the scanner button. If you don't have at least 2GB of available disk space, consider getting a bigger hard drive or a Zip drive for storing all those masterpieces.

Most of the scanners here were designed to scan images or text from paper rather than slides or other transparent materials. (The Microtek ScanMaker 3700 includes a special attachment for scanning slides.) If you plan to scan only slides, you would do well to shop specifically for a slide scanner.

TELL IT TO THE CAMERA

If posting family pictures to the Web is all you're after, you may want to consider getting a digital camera instead. Though you may have to spend more for a digital camera, it will easily meet your quality requirements and can make it easier to post your prize portrait on the Web.

The Scholarly Scanner 4 ESSENTIAL ZDNET DOWNLOADS FineReader Professional Recognize text from a variety of sources. HomeVault Keep track of scanned and imported documents. ImageDock Process scanned documents. Photocopier Pro Turn your scanner into a photocopier. DOWNLOAD THEM NOW FROM www.zdnet.com/downloads

rendition of our one-column OCR test and a surprisingly accurate interpretation of our three-column test. The three-column

test results were especially impressive in that the unit was able to distinguish between text and graphic elements and interpret each type correctly for placement in the resulting document. Only the Umax and Acer units rendered the threecolumn OCR test correctly. The Umax Astra 3400 also turned in the fastest scanning times in our roundup, averaging less than 27 seconds per scanned image, compared with the group average of 1 minute and 14 seconds.

For those users who

want no-fuss scanning, the Umax Astra 3400 automatically detects whether your document is color or monochrome and makes the appropriate adjustments to its scan settings. It also crops the image if you're scanning an item that's smaller than 8.5x11 inches, and it automatically rotates skewed images. Presto PageManager is also included for filing scanned documents into folders.

FLATBED SCANNERS

For less than \$100, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better budget scanner.

VISIONEER 6200 USB **

PROS: Least expensive; impressive ease of use CONS: Inferior OCR performance and color reproduction

f the five scanners we looked at, Visioneer's 6200 USB scanner took top honors for ease of use. You don't even need to figure out which button to press there's only one button on the unit.

When you put a document on the glass and press the button, a thumbnail version of your document appears on your PC in the main screen of the PaperPort Deluxe

other four units we tested. Colors weren't rendered quite as accurately as with the other scanners, and the OCR performance was fairly weak as well.

At \$89.99 estimated, the Visioneer 6200 USB also has the lowest price tag of the

ZDNet Price It!™	code
Acer 640BU	33849
HP ScanJet 3400C	33850
Microtek ScanMaker 3700	33851
Umax Astra 3400	33852
Visioneer 6200 USB	33853

group. It's a suitable choice for users on a tight budget or for those who have only an occasional need for a scanner.



Microtek ScanMaker 3700, Umax Astra 3400, and Visioneer 6200 USB

application. You can then drag the thumbnail over to an icon that represents what you want to do with the image. You can drag items to file folders for storage, or to the Microsoft Word icon to launch the Text-Bridge Pro OCR software, which converts your document into a Word file.

But you'll see a trade-off for this operational ease. The Visioneer's overall scanning quality was slightly below that of the

READY, SET, SCAN

or this amount of money, you really can't go wrong with any of these scanners. All offer relatively straightforward operation and good overall performance.

That said, we feel the Umax Astra 3400 had a slight edge over the competition given its significantly quicker scanning speed and its ability to handle the full spectrum of scan-

ning chores. The Astra 3400 also scores high marks for its elegant design and outstanding ease of use. For shoppers looking to get the most for their money, this is the scanner to buy.

RATED 1 TO 5 STARS	***	****	****	* * * * * Best	***
PRODUCT	Acer 640BU	HP ScanJet 3400C	Microtek ScanMaker 3700	Umax Astra 3400	Visioneer 6200 USB
COMPANY	Acer Peripherals America San Jose, CA 800-733-2237 www.acerperipherals.com	Hewlett-Packard Co. Palo Alto, CA 800-722-6538 www.hp.com	Microtek Lab Redondo Beach, CA 800-654-4160 www.mteklab.com	Umax Technologies Fremont, CA 800-562-0311 www.umax.com	Visioneer Pleasanton, CA 888-229-4172 www.visioneer.com
MFR. EST. PRICE	\$97.99	\$129	\$119.99 (list)	\$99	\$89.99

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- SB 64V Integrated Sound
- Integrated Intel® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
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Dell recommends Windows 2000 Professional for business.

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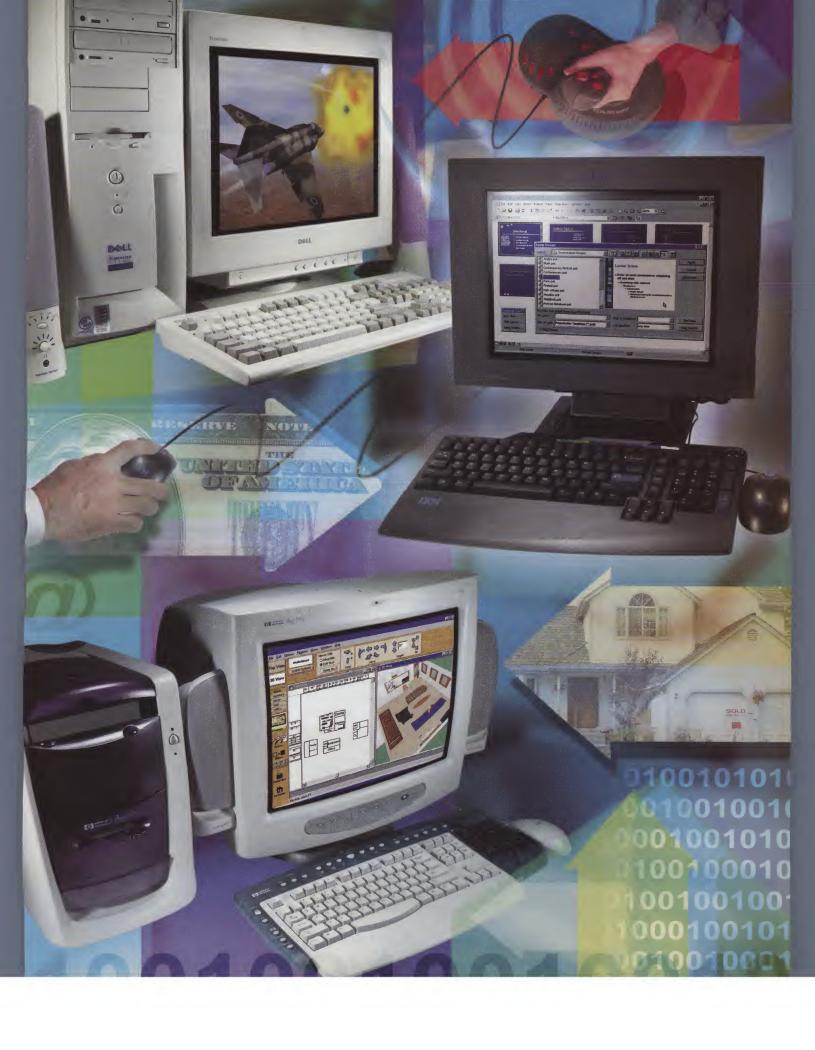
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Desktop PC performance is skyrocketing while competition among chip makers and system manufacturers is keeping prices down. With Intel and AMD releasing a spate of new chips, cache and RAM stores increasing, graphics vendors bringing new, revved-for-realism 3D boards to market, and 19-inch monitors and 40GB-plus hard drives proliferating, buyers can reap huge rewards. Indeed, this is a superb time to buy a desktop, whether you're shopping at the high end, in the bargain bin, or somewhere in between.

What do you really need in a system today, and what's an extravagance? That depends on how you'll use the PC. For example, if all you want to do is send e-mail, do some word processing, and occasionally browse the Web, just about any new model will do. Browsing the Web more frequently (especially graphics-heavy sites), playing arcade games, and exploring multimedia-rich CD-ROM titles up the ante, calling for a midrange processor, a more robust graphics adapter, and a good-size hard drive. Delve into large databases, leading-edge games, and processor-intensive tasks such as speech recognition, and you qualify for a high-end desktop.

Add just the right blend of other components to that base—such as an appropriate-size monitor, a DVD-ROM drive, a CD-RW drive, and a network card—and you can tailor a system for your particular needs. Self-configuring a system so that you get a snug fit is a good way to maximize every dollar you spend. To do so, you need to get ready for the myriad component choices you'll face. This Shopper's Guide will help.

> Falling prices and a smorgasbord of choices make now the time to buy.



- Typical question "Who can I call if something breaks?

Purchaser Profile

- Motto 'Keep it simple."
- Special needs Connecting wires should be color-coded.
- **Key features** Easy Internet connection; plug-and-play peripherals; strong warranty with onsite put you on hold for hours
- Least important amenities drives and tape backup drives), unless they come with easy-to-follow software
- Likely price range \$600 to \$1.800
- Favorite ZDNet download Ferret Power User Pack Get all the Ferret search tools at once.

FAST, FASTER, FASTEST

A parade of processors makes this fall a particularly good time to desktop-shop. Intel and AMD are introducing three new families of processors during the second half of the year, providing buyers with a remarkable selection.

Unless you're buying a high-end server or workstation, you can ignore Intel's new Itanium processor (code-named Merced). Current 32-bit software titles have to be recompiled to run natively on this 64-bit chip-otherwise, they run in a slower emulation mode. This chip will also be very expensive initially and won't work its way down to ordinary desktops anytime soon.

Intel's new Pentium 4 (code-named Willamette) is slated to debut at 1.4GHz or slightly faster. Key features include a new

pipeline design that speeds up instructions; a new set of 144 SIMD extensions that can accelerate video, encryption, and nextgeneration Internet applications; and support for the new 400MHz system bus, which runs three times faster than the fastest system bus (133MHz) offered with the Pentium III.

The Pentium 4 is tuned for higher clock speeds than the Pentium III, but while it can run at breathtakingly fast speeds, it's

expected to provide slightly less performance per megahertz than the Pentium III. Therefore, don't assume that a 1.4GHz Pentium 4 has a clock speed that's 40 percent faster than that of a 1GHz Pentium III. The actual percentage may be lower because the Pentium 4 is being tweaked for the fastest possible clock speed, even if it means that performance degrades slightly per megahertz.

Look for the Pentium 4 quickly to take its place at the high end of the consumer and corporate desktop realms. This will push the 1.1GHz and 1GHz Pentium III processors into more affordable performance desktops and the Pentium IIIs running at 733MHz to 900MHz into the mainstream.

Intel's Celeron will continue as the company's value processor. A good rule of thumb is to assume that a Celeron is roughly one clock speed slower than an equivalent Pentium III processor. For example, a 700MHz Celeron runs about as fast as a 650MHz Pentium III. Celeron chips use the 66MHz system bus, as opposed to the Pentium III's 100MHz and 133MHz buses (although 100MHz-bus-speed Celerons are planned for the future). In addition, the Celeron's L2 cache is set at 128K, compared with 256K and 512K for the Pentium III.

Because the Celeron lags the Pentium III by only one clock speed, it can be an especially good bargain. PC makers tend to place lesspowerful components in their Celeron models to create the impression that there's a substantial difference between the two chip families. A good strategy for middle-tier buyers is to purchase a Celeron system and beef up the other components, rather than pay a premium for a Pentium III and have to cut back on the components. This way, you can purchase either a comparable system for less money or a much better equipped system (componentwise) for the same amount of money.

AMD has become extremely competitive



Fully loaded: This Dell Dimension XPS B1000r packs a 19-inch monitor and a three-speaker Harman Kardon sound system.

with Intel over the past few years—and not just on the low end. AMD's Athlon family of processors has successfully gone head to head with the Pentium III, both in megahertz designations and overall performance. The fastest Athlon chip (code-named Thunderbird) uses copper wiring, which is a more efficient conduit for electricity. The Thunderbird has a 256K L1 cache on the chip itself; slower Athlons have a 512K L2 cache off-chip. The 256K L1 cache is actually faster than the 512K L2 cache because of its proximity to the processor. The Thunderbird also has a 128K L2 cache off the chip, giving it a combined cache of 384K. The Thunderbird processors don't have a distinct family name, but are marketed as "performance-enhanced" Athlons. AMD is expected to boost the clock speed of the Athlon to 1.5GHz by January 2001, so look for incremental steps this fall. Because AMD intends to remain fully competitive with Intel, we should continue to see downward pressure on prices for performance desktops.

On the low end, AMD's new Duron processor competes directly with Intel's Celeron. The Duron is AMD's first low-cost processor based on the company's Athlon technology. It features both a 128K L1 and 64K L2 cache, and should be available in 600MHz, 650MHz, 700MHz, and 750MHz flavors. Like the Athlon, the Duron supports a 200MHz system bus. With its faster cache and system bus, the Duron is fully competitive with the Celeron. Look for the Celeron and Duron processors to dominate the sub-\$1,000 desktop market.

COMPOSITION COUNTS

CPUs may take center stage in the news, but they shouldn't necessarily do so in your buying decision. For example, if you're working with 3D-rendering programs, you're probably better off spending \$100 less on your processor and \$100 more on your graphics adapter. If you're into video editing, you may want to direct your dollars toward a larger hard drive. And if you work extensively with desktoppublishing programs, it may be wise to favor a larger monitor, even if it means cutting back on the processor. Although vendors tend to match their better components with their faster processors, you can often mix and match the components yourself when buying direct, putting together a similarly impressive system with a somewhat slower processor.

Unless you're buying a sub-\$1,200 system, expect the desktop to have 128MB of RAM. Most systems have SDRAM, though some higher-priced configurations

Purchaser Profile

Small-office/ home-office user

- Typical question
- "Can I deduct this?"
- Special needs Strong vendor support

long run."

- Key features Latest office suite; built-in network card; strong three-year warranty with onsite service; option to extend warranty; reliable vendor with a good reputation
- Least important amenities Latest graphics card; top-of-the-line sound system
- Likely price range \$1,000 to \$2,400
- Favorite ZDNet download Simply Accounting 7.0a Meet the accounting needs of your small or home office.

use faster RDRAM. Also known as Rambus memory, RDRAM excels at handling sequential data in multitasking environments, but it isn't dramatically faster in every situation.

Some desktops ship with 256MB of RAM, which could be useful if you work with giant multimedia files or like to run several demanding applications at a time. If you plan to keep the system for several years, be sure to ask how much memory can be added to the system. Look for a maximum of at least 256MB, though 512MB or 1GB is preferable. Memory prices tend to fall over time, so 1GB



of RAM may be relatively inexpensive in two or three years. Also, be sure to ask how the memory has to be configured to reach the maximum. Some systems require you to take out existing modules to max out your system's memory with a RAM upgrade.

Given the ever-increasing use of large multimedia files in all aspects of computing, you cannot have too much hard drive space. Years ago, a 3GB drive seemed impossibly large, but today's seemingly mammoth 45GB drive may appear equally small four years from now. Even if your needs are relatively modest, consider buying a 20GB or larger drive. You'll find ways to fill it, and it's less expensive to add hard drive space now than it will be to add another drive later on.

Today's graphics adapters are so powerful—and so essential for the latest 3D programs—that they've surpassed CPUs in importance when it comes to moving pixels across the screen. If 3D games and 3D-rendering programs are regulars on your desktop, opt for a system with one of the fastest graphics processors: nVidia's GeForce2 GTS, GeForce2 MX, or GeForce; 3dfx's Voodoo 5500 or 6000; ATI's Radeon 256; or Matrox's Millennium G450.

These days, virtually every desktop has some form of 3D acceleration. The barest minimum you'll see today are PCs that don't have a graphics card at all but instead tap into the graphics routines included in Intel's 810, 810e, 815, 820, or 850 chip sets. If 3D graphics are vital to your work—or play—steer clear of a system that offers only this minimal amount of 3D support.

> Falling prices have helped 17-inch monitors replace 15-inch monitors as the desktop standard. You can find 19-inch models for less than \$500, so if you need to view your desktop comfortably at 1,280x1,024 or 1,600x1,200 resolution, consider stepping up to a 19-inch display. If you're buying a monitor with your system, you may be able to bundle in a 19-inch model for only \$100 to \$200 more than a 17-inch one. If your desk is too small to support a 19-inch—or even a 17-inch—monitor, look for units with a short-neck design; they don't stick out as far in the back. A 19-inch short-neck monitor is shorter than a typical 17-inch

monitor, just as a 17-inch short-neck monitor is shorter than a typical 15-inch monitor.

Flat-face monitors have a more uniform focus and reflect less glare, so they're preferable to those with a curved picture tube. And some monitors have powered USB ports so you can plug in USB peripherals such as mice, scanners, keyboards, and joysticks. For your convenience, some monitors use the USB connection to the PC to let you control the color and geometric settings from the Windows desktop. And if you place the benefits of integration (saved space, for instance) above sound quality and the ability to upgrade, you might prefer a model with built-in speakers and microphone.

Prices on flat-panel monitors (also known as LCD monitors) fell sharply in 1998, rose again in 1999, and have fallen again in 2000.

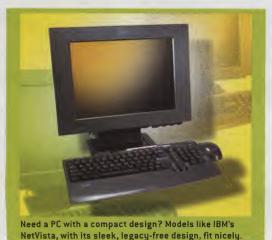
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Gamer

- Typical question "If I overclock the processor, will it improve the frame rate for Quake III?"
- Motto "Too much is not enough!"
- Special needs Easy access to the inside of the case
- Key features Latest graphics card; fastest processor; largest hard drive; top-of-the-line sound system
- Least important amenities Software bundles that consist only of productivity programs
- Likely price range \$1,500 to \$3,000
- Favorite ZDNet download Socket 2.04.001 Chat and play games over the Web. www.zdnet.com/downloads

Their advantages include a sharp and even focus, compact size, light weight, and essentially no electrical emissions. Their disadvantages include higher prices, difficulty in displaying resolutions other than the native resolution, and a slower response time (which can show up as a slight ghosting). The technical disadvantages are slowly disappearing with each new product generation, but you still have to pay a significant premium for these futuristic-looking monitors. If you choose an LCD, be sure it has a DVI input as well as a standard VGA input. DVI is set to become the connector of choice for digital monitors and digital-compatible graphics adapters.

(continued on page 155)



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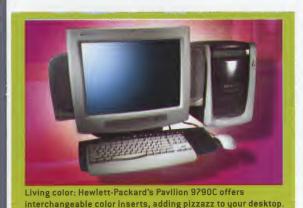
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(continued from page 151)

STORAGE, SIGHTS, AND SOUNDS

Shop for a desktop today, and you'll encounter a variety of drive configurations. Most manufacturers now include CD-RW drives instead of CD R drives, and some systems now include both a DVD-ROM and a CD-RW drive. If there's a single optical disc



drive on board, it's likely to be a CD-RW, which is beginning to replace the Zip drive as the standard removable-storage drive (apart from the floppy).

If your desktop's going to be part of one of the growing number of networked small businesses or broadband equipped homes. you can probably get by with just one tape backup drive on just one of your network connected desktops. As with corporate net works, you can do network wide backups to a single drive. Each individual desktop can use its CD RW or Zip drive for incremental backups and for copying moderately sized files to systems off the network.

You still won't find many DVD-ROM software titles, but the number of people watching DVD movies on their PCs is growing. Many of the latest high end graphics cards are fully capable of decoding MPEG-2 video. and today's faster processors are powerful chough to support software-based MPEG 2 decoders. For a slower system without one of the latest graphics cards, you may need a ded icated MPEG-2 decoder card. Without it, DVD playback will be jerky at times.

If MP3 nlcs and DVD movies are important to you, by all means spend a little extraand get a quality sound card and audio system Companies like Creative Labs and Turtle Beach have excellent sound cards that can add expansive 3D sound to your games, system sounds, music, and movies. For an even more satisfying audio experience, consider at least a three-piece speaker system. These systems have two satellite speakers and a separate subwoofer for richer bass tones. You can find

SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO DESKTOPS

three-piece speaker systems that provide five discrete channels of audio. Some of these systeins can decode Dolby Digital, as can many of the five-piece speaker systems out there.

THE FINAL SAY

Core components aside, you'll need to consider several other features as you shop. Some are designed to support or enhance a specific task. These include an IEEE 1394, or FireWire, port, which you can use to send video to and from a digital camcorder; a network card, which is often used to share a printer or broadband connection; and an enhanced keyboard, which may have dedicated keys for Internet access or controls for adjusting the play-

back of music and movies. For example, with Gateway's Performance 933xl, you can add an IEEE 1394 card, choose among nine different networking options, and select from three different keyboards.

Ergonomics and aesthetics matter, too. This season, the shape, size, and color of your computer are also points of comparison.

Purchaser Profile

* Family



- Typical question 'How much abuse can this thing really take?"
- Motto "We'll have to share."
- Special needs Sturdy construction
- **Key features** Diverse software bundle (office suite, encyclopedia, finance program, and so
- on); strong three-year warranty with onsite service Least important amenities Network card (unless considering broadband Net access or sharing a
- Likely price range \$600 to \$2,600
- Favorite ZDNet download Ancestral Quest 3.0.10 Research your family tree. www.zdnet.com/downloads

Purchaser Pro

- Student
- Typical question 'How many MP3 files can I fit on the
- Motto

hard drive?

- "Pound it till it breaks!"
- Special needs Has to fit on a dorm-room desk
- Key features CD-RW drive; DVD drive; latest graphics card; top-of-the-line sound system; bundled word processor and encyclo-
- Least important amenities Software bundles that consist only of productivity programs; warranty (let Mom and Dad worry about that)
- Likely price range \$800 to \$2,000
- Favorite ZDNet download CuteMX Download and share files on the Net. www.zdnet.com/downloads

If you choose a space-saving compact model or a minitower PC, you may limit your expansion options. For example, IBM's svelte NetVista X40 integrates its PC components into the narrow base of its LCD monitor. It has no expansion slots, drive bays, serial port, or parallel port; your peripherals connect to its USB ports. Such a system can be a fair trade-off-just be aware of what you're giving up. And regardless of the shape or size you choose, you don't need to settle for beige. For example, Sony VAIO desktops come in steel gray and metallic blue; Hewlett-Packard lets you personalize its HP Pavilion home PCs with inserts available in cobalt blue, krypton green, and xenon purple.

Be sure to scrutinize the vendor's warranty and support information. If you're unhappy with your system or if it's not performing up to par, you need to know that you can return it without a penalty (such as a restocking fee) or that repairs will be covered for the first one to three years. Also, ask who picks up the shipping costs if repairs are needed.

With the number of PC choices at an alltime high, it's wise to spend some time exploring your options. Don't shy away from swapping out a component for a more—or less—powerful version. Buying in today's market lets you fine-tune a system to your needs and budget with accuracy—if you take full advantage of the palette of parts and processors before you. V



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32 MB nVidia TNT2 M64 Pro Graphics

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32 MB nVidia TNT2 M64 Pro Graphics

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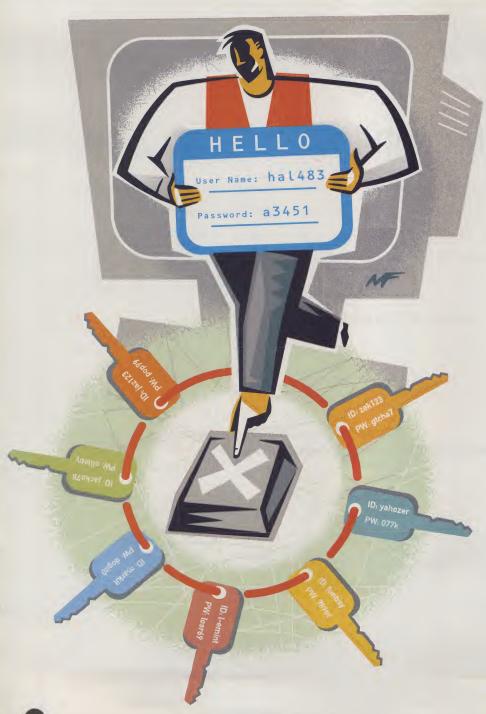
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Sign On Once, Surf Often BY LYNN GINSBURG



These three Web services speed up surfing by streamlining logins.

hen you're clipping down the Web's highways and byways, shopping and gathering information, nothing's more annoying than hitting a cyber speed bump—a login or registration form. In fact, today, when you head online, raring to page-hop, you're increasingly likely to trip over sites that demand you first enter a username and password. Adding to the aggravation is the burden of having to remember, or at least manage, all the different login names and passwords that you have accumulated.

Fortunately, a new breed of Web tools is gearing up to smooth the login process. These single-sign-on solutions, also known as digital ID services, manage your access to sites that require a user ID and password to log in. You then only need to remember your username and password for this central sign-on site.

Each of the three single-sign-on services we look at here—digitalme, Microsoft Passport, and v-Go 2.0takes its own approach to automating the process. And while each of the three services has its strengths and weaknesses, none is completely reliable yet.

The technology used to automate the sign-on process is still new. With no universal standards yet in place for Web sign-ons and forms, getting automatically logged in to a site remains a hit-ormiss prospect. All three services are free, however, so it won't cost you a penny to let them help out where they can. If you do a lot of surfing, and

thus a lot of signing in, single-sign-on services will at least get you through the gate more quickly than before.

Surfers should note, however, that because all of these services' Web sites collect and store your personal data, privacy is a concern. Each of the three we test-drove has an explicit privacy statement. With these sites, and any others that serve as repositories for privileged information,



As you fill in a form, digitalme can record it for you and automatically fill it in the next time you visit the site.

you'll need to read the privacy statements carefully to know what promises are made regarding the use and protection of your personal data. Don't release any information without first doing so.

DIGITALME * * *

PROS: Consistent auto-login; comparatively good form filling CONS: Fills in forms only partially; scant documentation for key features such as meCards

ovell's digitalme aims to help you create and maintain your digital identity. For the most part, the service accomplishes this mission.

The registration process for digitalme is the easiest of the group. Simply provide a username and e-mail address, pick a password, and you're signed up for the service. Before you can use the automatic-login and form-filling tools, however, you must also download the digitalme toolbar and install it in your browser.

To help you manage your digital identity and the amount of personal information you'd like to share with others, digitalme has you create meCards, forms you fill out with as much or as little personal information as you choose. You can also create alias-identity meCards to help you manage any alternate digital personalities you might have.

The auto-login process is simple to use and works well. Just select Record This Login from the digitalme toolbar, and as you enter your ID and password, the program records it. You can then select the login page

UNIVERSAL SIGN-ON SERVICES

from the list of recorded sites the next time you want to be signed in automatically.

In theory, the form-recording tool works much the same way. The tool can record information as you fill out a form, then automatically complete it for you the

next time you visit the site. Though the form tool records data faithfully, it doesn't always fill in all of the fields in a form. Having some of the data filled in is better than starting from scratch, but it's still inconvenient to have to finish a lot of half-completed forms.

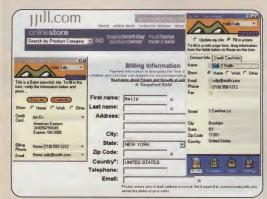
Fortunately, you can also use your meCards to fill in forms, although digitalme offers little documentation about this option. Just choose Fill in the Form from the digitalme toolbar, and the program fills out the form to the best of its ability using your active meCard profile. The meCards work better than the form-recording tool, but they, too, only partially fill out forms.

In sum, digitalme's automatic-login features are reliable and useful. The service has great promise, especially if its formfilling feature can be improved.

Clicking Into the Express Lane

ogging in is just one of the repetitive tasks that slow Netizens down. For the millions of us doing a lot of our shopping online, the drudgery of filling out form after form (including those that ask for credit-card information) at Web stores is a drag, if not a deterrent.

Digital wallets can automate this process. A somewhat blurry line separates digital wal-



You can use Gator's onscreen form filler to fill in forms using drag-and-drop, or you can use one-click fill-in at Gator merchant sites.

MICROSOFT PASSPORT ★ 🖈

PROS: Reliable sign-in; wallet capability CONS: Too few sites supported to make it useful

icrosoft Passport has the biggest brand-name recognition of the three services we reviewed. But currently, Passport shows neither the depth of features nor the widespread adoption that one expects from Microsoft products.

Passport offers amenities found in the competing services, namely automatic login and a digital-wallet service that fills in both contact and credit-card information. Unfortunately, Passport only works with partner Web sites. At press time, these included only 10 sites for automatic sign-in and only 35 sites for the wallet feature. However, Microsoft expects more than 25 sign-in sites and more than 130 wallet sites to be participating soon.

To register for Passport, you provide your e-mail address, password, secret question, country, state, and ZIP code. Microsoft then sends you back an e-mail requesting verification. Once that's done, you're registered for the service.

If a site is Passport-enabled, you can automatically log in by clicking on the Passport sign-in icon. For sites that support the Passport wallet, you can speed up the checkout process as well, because the

lets from single-sign-on services. Most digital-wallet services will also log you in and fill out forms. But the best ones focus on the tasks of securely storing your credit-card information and making it easy to fill out those pesky payment forms.

Digital-wallet services such as the ones built into Microsoft Passport, AOL's Quick Checkout (payment.aol.com), Qpass PowerWallet (www.qpass.com), and CyberCash's InstaBuy (www.instabuy.com) only work with participating merchants. This inherently limits their usefulness.

EntryPoint's eWallet (www.e-wallet.com), on the other hand, can be used at any mer-

chant site. It offers one-click dragand-drop access for filling out forms from merchants it recognizes, but it can also fill out forms at any site, using a drag-and-drop process. To limit the likelihood that hackers will steal your credit-card information, eWallet stores this sensitive data locally, on your computer.

Another promising digital-wallet service, Gator (www.gator.com), offers similar amenities, with local storage of your personal data and comparable form-filling capabilities.

If you shop as often as you surf, these universally accepted e-wallets can make it easier to fork over your digital dough.

service automatically fills in shipping, billing, and credit-card information.

Unfortunately, we found no indication of the Passport icon anywhere on a number of sites represented by Microsoft as wallet partners. If these partners are indeed Passportenabled, they're certainly not going out of their way to advertise the fact and facilitate the checkout process with the service.

Although the wallet feature is simple to use, the dearth of actively participating online merchants makes its usefulness too limited, at this point, to be of consequence.



Sign in with Passport before shopping online at sites that support the service and your contact info is completed automatically.

If the service gains wider acceptance, its streamlining simplicity could be a boon to surfers and shoppers.

V-G0 2.0 ★ ★ ★

PROS: Graphical passwords; fast and intuitive pop-up login functionality; wallet capability

CONS: Form filling only works for partner merchant sites; Instant Logon doesn't work with Netscape browsers

f the three services, Passlogix's v-Go 2.0 takes the most unusual approach to securing your digital identity. Instead of having you enter a name and password at the v-Go site for automating your login to other sites, v-Go has you create a unique graphical sequence. For instance, using v-Go's Cocktail Lounge password window, you could mix a gin and tonic as your unique graphical password. Or in the

UNIVERSAL SIGN-ON SERVICES

Hiding Valuables password window, you could hide a wallet in the top drawer of the dresser. This graphical approach offers excellent security, and it's also a lot of fun to use.

You start the registration process at v-Go by downloading the software and the graphical password window. The software's wizard then helps you set up and test your graphical password.

> You must also enter your full name and e-mail address, and enter five answers to unique questions, such as who your favorite teacher in high school was, that you can use for verification in case you forget your password. The program then downloads a serial number for you to use to activate the software.

You can run v-Go in the background as you surf. Whenever you open a Web page that requires a signin, v-Go pops up with a wizard that offers to create a configuration for logging in to that site. When you call up that page again, v-Go automatically logs you in. Unfortunately, v-Go

doesn't work consistently. And its Instant Logon feature only works with Internet Explorer, a major drawback for the many people using Netscape Navigator or other browsing software.

Like Passport, v-Go's wallet service can only fill in forms at v-Go-enabled merchant sites. And while Passport has at least a few sites already signed up, v-Go had none at press time. The company promises that this will change soon.

In addition to its head-to-head features, v-Go is alone in offering password protection

ZDNet Price It!™	code
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v-Go's graphical passwords let you create a unique sequence, such as hiding a wallet in a dresser drawer.

for your documents and PC. And because all v-Go information, including passwords, resides on your local hard drive, a mobility wizard can copy your v-Go settings and passwords to another computer.

Like all of these services, v-Go's got some kinks to iron out before reaching its full potential. Working consistently should be its number-one goal. In the meantime, its graphical take on things brings some levity to the serious world of security.

SIGN-IN TOMORROW

hile the future looks rosy for single-sign-on services, the present is more of a predawn gray for this pack of not-quite-ready-for-primetimers. Even so, if you're a heavy-duty surfer, some help in this department may be better than none. Having a form automatically filled in three-quarters of the way is better than confronting a blank one. The same goes for getting instant login at 50 percent of the sites that you visit. It's better than nothing, especially since it's free.

Of the three, Passport is the least helpful. The paucity of Passport sign-in sites, coupled with the fact that so few merchant sites are participating, makes it almost a waste of time at this juncture. Graphical passwords and truly automated pop-up login software earn solid marks for v-Go. However, until you can consistently count on it to log you in to every site, you're bound to be dissatisfied. Your best chance of maintaining warp speed as you navigate the Web's growing number of sign-on sites is digitalme. This service doesn't consistently complete forms, but it does a relatively good job and can definitely speed up the task.

Of course, if you're intolerant of imperfection, check back in a few months to see how these works in progress have improved. All three are striving to deliver something better than they're offering today. V

< PRODU	CT SUMMARY>	For real-time pricing, (go to <i>priceit.zdnet.com</i> and enter numb
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REQUIRES	Internet Explorer or Navigator (version 4.x or later of either) with JavaScript and cookies enabled	Navigator or Internet Explorer (version 3.x or later of either)	Pentium processor; 2.5MB hard drive space; Windows 95, 98, or 2000, or NT 4.0 with Service Pack 4
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re you annoyed by the confusing array of long-distance calling plans available? If you're like most people, weighing the merits of a 5-cent-a-minute weekend rate versus a 7-cent-a-minute weeknight plan is probably pretty low on your list of things to do. Instead, why not think free?

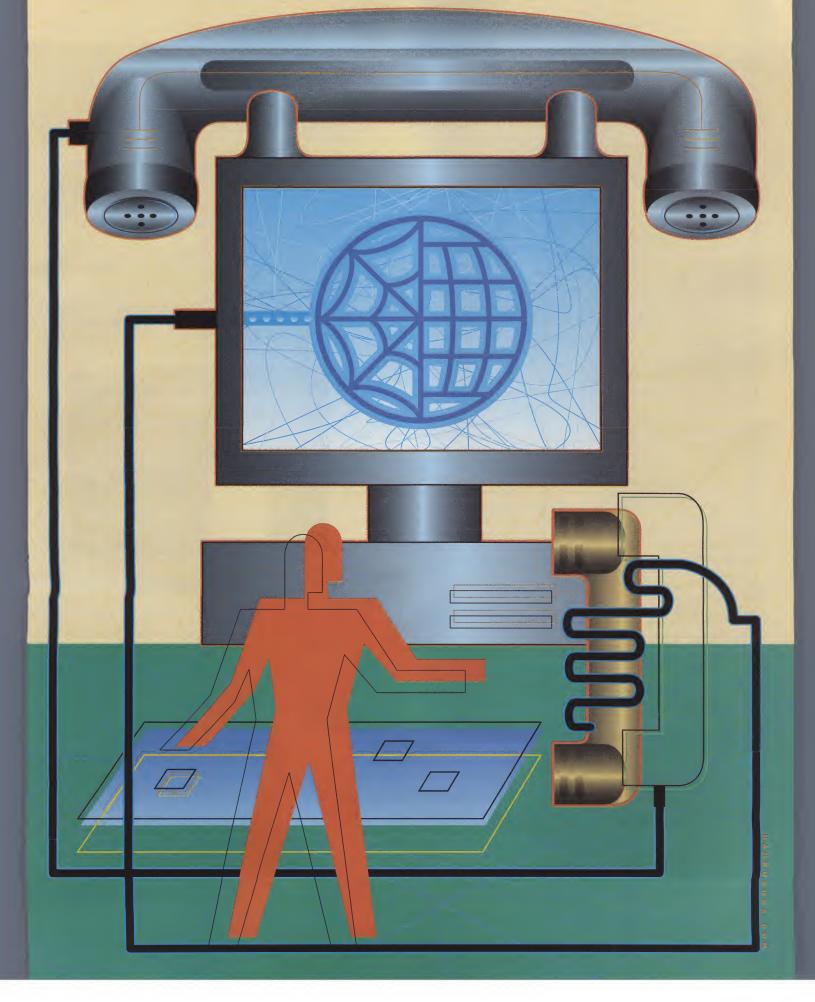
Yep, we're talking free long distance.

By using a standard Internet connection to make your voice calls, you can ignore those costly and confounding long-distance calling plans and save yourself a bundle. And the technology that makes it possible, called voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), is becoming easier to use, although the quality of calls still lags behind that of traditional phone lines.

VoIP relies on software that transforms your analog voice into digital packets. VolP service providers, such as Net2Phone (www.net2phone.com) and Dialpad.com, send these digital packets over the Internet. When the packets arrive at the other end, they are reassembled and turned into an analog signal that the other person can understand.

And because voice traffic is routed over the Internet in packets that do not tie up a dedicated phone line, most PC-to-PC calls are free. Conversely, standard voice calls take up a dedicated connection between you and the party you are calling and therefore cost much more to make.

Making cheap, or even free, phone calls over the Internet is more than a fad—it could be the next big thing.



IP. With No PC

Dooting up a computer just to call Mom back in Kansas isn't the most convenient way to save money. So Panasonic plans to help you harness the savings of VoIP with just the push of a button—and without the use of a PC.

Priced from \$89.95 to \$239.95, Panasonic's upcoming line of conventional cordless 900MHz phones offer a variety of features, including a special Net2Phone IP voice button.

According to the company, when you first use the VoIP button, the Panasonic phones will call the local Net2Phone point of presence. You then set up the phone for Internet calling with a 5-minute voice-menu-driven session; thereafter, all you need to do is supply the code for your Net2Phone calling card.

When placing a call, simply push the Net2Phone button, wait 10 to 15 seconds (Panasonic hopes), and you'll be connected over the Net. Of course, if you don't want the hassle of waiting or the chance of a poor connection, you can place calls in the usual way, through your long-distance phone carrier, by not pushing the button.

Net2Phone calls over the Panasonic phones will save you money, but you'll have to pay in advance. Although there's no contract and no bill, users will have to subscribe to Net2Phone. All prices weren't established by press time, but the companies said that the first 60 minutes of VoIP calls will be free, with a domestic rate of 3.9 cents per minute thereafter. International calling prices will vary by country.

Panasonic is betting that Net2Phone will improve the quality of its calls. In fact, the company expects to build 1.5 million of the new phones by the end of this year.



cordless Net phone

WEB PHONE CALLS

While "free" is the most common word usually associated with VoIP, only PC-to-PC calls are really gratis. To make a call from your computer to a regular phone still costs money. Within the United States, for example, Net2Phone charges 3.9 cents a minute for such calls (versus 7 cents a minute for AT&T). Some overseas calls cost more because other countries may charge termination fees that can be five times those levied in the United States.

The savings potential is what will propel VoIP into the mainstream. According to Parks Associates, voice traffic on packetswitched systems accounted for just 2.5 billion minutes of calls last year, but it's predicted that by 2004 VoIP will carry more than 114 billion minutes of long-distance voice traffic.

Already Net2Phone, which began operations in 1996, handles an average of 200,000 calls a day. And Dialpad.com, which launched just last year, signed up more than 500,000 users in its first month and, at press time, claimed more than 8 million registered users.

VoIP first began making waves five years ago, and despite continuing limitations in convenience and sound quality, the technology has steadily matured. Initially, for instance, you could only place calls from one computer to another; now you can make a call from your PC to a landline phone.

This type of service, provided by Dialpad.com, converts your voice into packets that travel from your computer through your Internet service provider and then out to Dialpad's partner, GTE Internetworking. GTE converts your digitized, packetized voice from the Net into an analog signal and then routes that signal to a local telephone company, which in turn puts you in touch with the person you want to reach. This effectively bypasses the long-distance carriers, although GTE sometimes has to pay a small termination fee of less than 1 cent, the cost of which is covered by Dialpad's banner ads.

Some newer VoIP services seem and sound like regular telephone calls. For example, I-Link's V-Link (www.i-link.com) offers inexpensive conference calls and follow-me numbers that track you down wherever you are, and it lets you make calls from a standard telephone or cell phone. Your voice travels from your phone company's central office to

the I-Link gateway, where it is converted into IP packets and then handled by I-Link's network. This enables I-Link to offer low perminute rates (less than 3 cents) and unifiedmessaging-style features.

PARTY LINE

s you can imagine, traditional phone companies—and technology industry heavyweights—are not amused by upstarts trying to break into their markets. But they're not exactly trying to quash VoIP, either

Rather than trying to beat the VoIP companies, some traditional phone and telecommunications players are hopping on the bandwagon. AT&T, for example, owns more than 30 percent of Net2Phone. And Sprint offers Net2Phone service for some overseas calls. The technology is even gaining ground in Europe, where Germany's



Microsoft NetMeeting lets you easily "dial" someone by entering an e-mail address.

Deutsche Telekom has introduced its own Web-based VoIP service.

The telcos aren't the only ones to see a huge potential in VoIP. America Online's new Netscape 6 browser (www.netscape.com) comes with Net2Phone built in. And the popular Internet portal Yahoo has integrated Net2Phone into its People Search section (people.yahoo.com). Yahoo users can look up phone numbers online; when they find the right number, they can simply click and call directly from their PCs to that phone.

Even Microsoft is offering a stripped-down VoIP service, as a part of MSN. It takes advantage of CallWave's Internet Answering Machine (www.callwave.com) to allow you to be online and see the number and name of a person trying to call you on the same line. You can then accept the call or keep surfing. And at press time, Microsoft had announced that it also plans to offer free domestic calling on MSN (www.msn.com) using Net2Phone's software.

LATE NIGHTS ONLY

onsidering the potential cost savings, why isn't everyone using the Net to phone home? The main problem is voice quality. You will often hear VoIP calls described as being "cellular-quality." And that's pretty accurate—if you have a lot of cellular problems in your area.

Voices on VoIP are, at best, clipped, with the occasional bit of static and noise mixed in, making a conversation over your PC sound like it's happening over a cheap speakerphone. At worst, words get chopped off, and volume levels waver, rendering speech unintelligible.

There are several reasons for this poor quality. First, the Internet was not designed to handle a consistent flow of data traffic, so getting all the packets of voice data from one end to the other in a smooth and timely fashion can be tricky. Some sections of the Net may be fast, while others are plagued by bottlenecks, which plays havoc with the sound of your voice. Calls made late at night often work well, but you'll notice a distinct deterioration in quality if you place a call in the afternoon in the middle of the work week.

Another issue with PC-to-PC calls is the computers themselves. Using a speaker-andmicrophone combination can cause considerable feedback, unless you're careful with the volume controls or use the Push to Talk option often available with these services. Naturally, the more applications you run during a phone call, the more you'll affect the overall performance and the ability of your PC to manage a smooth data flow.

Making a phone call with VoIP can also be a hassle. PC-to-PC calls may be free, but the other person has to be Net2Phone YAP Phone online at the same time and using the same software, which makes finding another VoIP user awkward. With Microsoft NetMeeting, for example, you have to sift through Microsoft's directory to see who's online or scan a variety of third-party online directories.

REACH OUT AND IP SOMEONE

espite the generally poor quality of VoIP calls, many people remain willing to put up with them for one reason-the price. PC-to-PC calls are free, and those with only one phone line can surf and talk simultaneously. All you need is an Internet connection, a microphone, and a pair of speakers (or a headset) connected to your computer.

More than half a dozen VoIP programs

WEB PHONE

are already on the market, most of which offer free PC-to-PC calling. The most basic and least expensive of these offerings is Speak Freely 7.1 (www.speakfreely.org). Speak Freely is freeware that only lets you place computerto-computer calls, but it includes answeringmachine features and conferencing options.

NetMeeting (www.microsoft.com/ netmeeting) offers free computer-to-computer calls as well, and the application is included with Windows ME, 98, and 2000. (Windows 95 users can download a copy of NetMeeting for free.) VocalTec's \$49.95 Internet Phone (www.vocaltec.com) also offers free PC-to-PC calling and, like NetMeeting, includes other, more sophisticated features, such as videoconferencing and various directory services.

NetSpeak's \$19.95 WebPhone (www.netspeak.com) for home users offers only PC-to-PC connections, although NetSpeak does provide businesses with enterprise software for PC-to-phone calling.

Most programs also let you call a regular telephone from your computer, although

they charge a fee for this service. The exception is Dialpad, whose free Java applet offers unlimited domestic PC-tophone connections without charge.

PhoneFree.com, which has a nifty voice-mail feature, charges a flat rate of \$15 a month for unlimited PC-tophone calls. Net2Phone charges 3.9 cents per minute for calls to anywhere in the United States; international calls cost more. A call to the Netherlands, for example, costs 5

cents a minute. But that's a huge discount over AT&T's fees, which range from \$1.25 to \$2.05 a minute.

In the future, it should be easier for home users to reach out and IP someone. Toward that end, Net2Phone recently introduced two VoIP-enabled gadgets, the YAP Phone and the YAP Jack.

Not intended to supplant regular phones, YAP is an acronym for Your Alternate Phone. The YAP Phone handset costs \$60 and includes a prepaid Net2Phone calling card good for 1,000 minutes of talk time in the United States (1 cent per minute thereafter); PC-to-PC calls are free. The benefit is that you don't need to struggle with speaker and microphone controls, because the YAP Phone simply plugs into a USB connector on your PC.

Ithough voice over IP technology is becoming more approachable, many users worry that the days of nearly free long-distance VoIP calls may be numbered. The taxman cometh, they warn.

Indeed, some traditional telecommunications companies and the United States Telecom Association have lobbied to make Internet telephony companies subject to the same treatment as other communications firms, including the taxes and fees paid to the local phone companies that complete the calls.

In response, VoIP service companies made a lot of phone calls complaining about a bill passed by the House of Representatives last spring called the Internet Access Charge Prohibition Act (House Resolution 1291). The bill, which ostensibly bans perminute charges imposed by

the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on ISPs, includes an amendment that specifically leaves VoIP operators open to such additional charges.

But the resolution apparently has little chance of making it through the Senate. Since its initial passage, lobbying in favor of it has been weak, and White House watchers point out that President Clinton would likely veto it were it to make its way through the Senate.

Moreover, to further stymie the idea of imposing additional charges on VoIP operators like Net2Phone, a conflicting bill called the Internet Telephony Access Charge Prohibition Act (H.R. 4769) has been introduced. It would explicitly prevent the FCC from allowing per-minute access charges on Internet telephony providers. V

More convenient still is the \$160 YAP Jack. Similar to an answering machine, the YAP Jack, which houses a 56Kbps modem, plugs in between your regular phone and the wall jack. You then configure it to work with your ISP. YAP Jack-to-YAP Jack phone calls are free, but regular domestic calls cost 2.9 cents per minute.

When you want to place a call, the YAP Jack dials your ISP, then connects to Net2Phone's network, which in turn connects you to the party you're trying to reach. When the connection is made, the YAP Jack rings your phone. Waiting to make the connection can take up to a minute, and such delays would doubtless irritate business users. But home users may find the savings worth the wait. On the other hand, the audio quality isn't much better than that of the PC-based solutions, and you still need to pay an ISP for Internet access.

A similar product, the Actiontec USB InternetPhoneWizard, is available from Actiontec Electronics (www.actiontec.com). For a full review of the InternetPhone-Wizard, see the Reviews section.

VOIP SPEED AHEAD

n spite of these limitations, VoIP remains an attractive technology, not only to consumers looking to save a buck, but also to carriers and phone companies burdened by ever-increasing bandwidth demands.

A conventional voice call over a regular circuit-switched network takes up a dedicated 64Kbps channel. But much of that circuit is wasted with pauses and gaps between words. A packet-switched system can take advantage of those gaps, fitting additional packets into



Dialpad.com lets you easily place calls from your computer to standard landline phones via a Java applet.

the spaces and enabling several conversations to be transmitted over the same channel.

To quiet complaints about choppy voice quality, hardware companies and ISPs are working to make VoIP sound better. Cisco Systems (www.cisco.com) and 3Com Corp. (www.3com.com), for instance, are developing upgradable routers that can be adjusted with

WEB PHONE CALLS

software to take on the new demands of VoIP. Meanwhile, VoIP service companies continue to improve their software with features to ensure faster packet delivery. One such innovation is to ping all possible network gateway computers that have access to the public network and then choose the fastest path before establishing a VoIP connection.

But to really make VoIP calls sound like landline calls, we'll all need faster Internet connections.

Already, CableLabs (www.cablelabs.com) has started testing next-generation cable modems that use the Data Over Cable Service Interface Specification (DOCSIS) 1.1. Among

its various enhancements, the new specification aims to improve voice calls over the Internet by prioritizing packets of a voice call so that all the pieces arrive in the right order, at the right time.

You may soon be able to place such high-speed calls over your television, too. Net2Phone is already working with Microsoft on set-top-box software to do just that. And you can expect to see announcements concerning voice-over-DSL services by the end of the year.

Another area in which VoIP service is starting to come into its own is in controlled network environments, such as a LAN. In a small-office or corporate situation, an internal LAN can be managed more easily, promising a certain level of performance. 3Com, for example, now offers small-office systems that accept all standard incoming voice calls, con-

vert them into digital packets, and then pass them through a LAN, guaranteeing high voice quality. Moreover, such systems can save a company thousands of dollars by forgoing a private branch exchange (PBX); by using an internal VoIP system, companies can include a variety of features, including call forwarding and conference calling for free.

THE NEXT GENERATION

s quality of service improves, you'll see more VoIP-related services that connect you



Speak Freely 7.1 lets you place free PC-to-PC calls, and includes answering-machine features and conferencing.

transparently.

Leading the way is I-Link's V-Link service. V-Link delivers features such as a follow-me number that can be set to ring up to nine other numbers sequentially until the calling party reaches you. It also can handle conference calls and be set to redirect faxes and e-mail, and consolidate all messages into one online account. V-Link calls sound just like regular telephone calls, but I-Link's network relies on VoIP to manage all these features. A V-Link subscription costs \$9.95 a month.

Also on the horizon, VoIP will become available on handheld and mobile devices. BSquare Corp. (www.bsquare.com) plans to release its bInTouch program for Pocket PCs this fall. Expected to cost about \$50, the software will let PDA owners place voice calls over the Net. Users will simply plug their handhelds into a network or ISP, and then tap on a number to place a call.

You can anticipate more talking Web sites, thanks to VoIP. Say, for instance, you're surfing for a new power drill but can't seem to find the model you want. A service representative could now pipe in over your speakers, "Can I help you find a particular make?" Cahoots (www.cahoots. com), a free 1.5MB download, is being used by some e-commerce marketers to let sales reps talk to you live over the Net while you surf the site. (For a test drive, check out www.ferrari.com.)

Even with all of these features, the Holy Grail of Internet telephony is still to come: unified messaging. If all the voice traffic currently on telecommunications lines were turned into packets of data, it could more easily be managed like e-mail, available along with faxes and text messages in one place. You could have it all read to you over the phone, or call it up online.

And that's a call most people wouldn't mind making. ▼

The Vanguard of VolP

The following products and services let you place calls using voice over IP.

Actiontec USB InternetPhoneWizard (www.actiontec.com)

BSquare Corp. (www.bsquare.com)

Cahoots (www.cahoots.com)

CallWave Internet Answering Machine (www.callwave.com)

Dialpad.com (dialpad.com)

I-Link V-Link (www.i-link.com)

Microsoft NetMeeting (www.microsoft.com/netmeeting)

Net2Phone (www.net2phone.com)

Net2Phone YAP Phone, YAP Jack (www.net2phone.com)

NetSpeak WebPhone (www.netspeak.com)

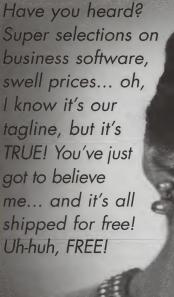
PhoneFree (www.phonefree.com)

Speak Freely 7.1 (www.speakfreely.org)

VocalTec Internet Phone (www.vocaltec.com)

Yahoo People Search (people.yahoo.com)







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C++ Builder V5.0 .\$279/\$446 Delphi V5.0 Pro ..#232/\$449 J Builder V3.5 Pro .\$259/\$468



Corel WordPerf.Office 2000 Standard\$62/\$168

Professional \$137/\$214 Small Business . .\$127/\$284

MS Visual 6.0 Programming

Enterprise\$722/\$929 Professional \$394/\$545 Basic/C++ Pro ...\$233/\$377



Adobe Acrobat 40

Windows 0/S

Windows 2000 Pro \$137/\$232 Wndws Millenium . .\$60/\$155 Windows 98.2\$76/\$148



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Before you spend another weekend with your real-estate agent, spend some quality time with your Web browser.

by Nancy A. Lang

very weekend it's the same thing. Scour the Sunday paper, tour open houses, check out your real-estate agent's latest listing. Then there's the time spent schlepping from bank to bank in search of a mortgage.

Wouldn't it be nice if the Web could make this process easier? Well, it can. While nobody should be foolhardy enough to buy a house sight unseen via the Internet, the Web can be an invaluable tool for doing much of your legwork right from your keyboard. Online calculators tell you how much you can afford. Financial sites reveal the going mortgage rates in your region. Online lenders deliver the prequalification letters many agents require before they'll take you across the threshold. You can even apply for a mortgage from the comfort of your living room.

You'll find countless Web sites listing homes for sale by owner and through

brokers. These listings bring you the particulars of a property, such as exterior (and sometimes even interior) photos, schooldistrict information, the tax rate, the age of the house, and the type of construction, so you can narrow your search for your future domicile without leaving your present one.

CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

Before you even start your search, do a reality check. You can see yourself enjoying sunsets on the deck of that five-bedroom waterfront contemporary, but lenders may lack your vision. They use set qualifying ratios to determine how much you can afford to spend each month for principal, interest, tax, and insurance (PITI): typically either 28 percent of your gross monthly income or 36 percent of that amount minus your monthly debt, whichever is lower.

You can do your own calculations, but the Web makes it easier with numerous online financial calculators. (See the sidebar "Affordability Calculators.") One fine example is Hugh's Mortgage and Financial Calculators (www.interest.com/hugh/calc). Scroll down and click on "How much house can you afford?" Then fill in the fields. To calculate credit-card debt, add up the minimum monthly payments on all your cards. The default mortgage rate at the time we visited Hugh's site was on the high side, at 8.25 percent, so before you continue, you may want to change it to a more realistic number. While rates vary by region, the national average at this writing was about 7.8 percent. For an idea of mortgage rates in your area, you can turn to sites such as Yahoo (biz.yahoo.com/ b/r/m.html) or bankrate.com and select a region. (See the sidebar "Mortgage Rates.")

When considering how much cash you have for a down payment, don't forget to factor in closing costs. These costs can run anywhere from 3 percent to 6 percent of the mortgage amount, depending on the area of the country. New York, for instance, is at the top of the scale, at 6 percent. Items included in closing costs also vary across the country, but they usually include title insurance, attorney fees, a survey fee, discount points, transfer taxes, and documentpreparation fees.



START HUNTING

Now that you have a good idea what you can afford, you can start your virtual house hunt. This is no easy feat, considering how many real-estate sites are on the Web. Along with Realtor.com, the official site of the National Association of Realtors, you'll find national broker sites such as Century 21 (www.century21.com), regional sites such as Hamptons Real Estate Online (www.hreo. com), and Web-only megasites such as CyberHomes (www.cyberhomes.com). You'll also find sites specializing in homes for sale by owner, or FSBOs (pronounced "fizbos" in the business), such as FSBO (www.fsbo.com) and byowner.com. In addition, portals such as Lycos and Yahoo offer local directories of real-estate agencies as

well as classified ads. (See the sidebar "Virtual House Hunting.")

To get a comprehensive view of what's out there, check as many sites as possible. Most towns have their own multiple-listing services (MLSs), and these are good sites to find, because you can view the listings of many different agencies all in one place. Try entering "MLS AND

your state" in your favorite search engine to find the MLS site in your area. If you're looking for a home on Long Island, for instance, MLSLIRealtor.com (www.mlsli-realtor.com) is a great place to start. The site displays the listings of more than 1,500 Long Island real-estate offices. You can start your search by selecting a county (Nassau, Suffolk, or Queens), then refine it by entering minimum and maxi-

REAL-ESTATE SITES

mum prices, choosing single- or multifamily, and specifying the number of bedrooms and bathrooms you're looking for, the length of time the listing has been available, and the particular amenities (eat-in kitchen, fireplace, basement, waterfront, water view, garage, pool) you're seeking.

For the granddaddy of all multiplelisting-service sites, go to Realtor.com. It features more than 1.3 million listings, plus apartment and rental listings, information on financing and insurance, a mover's checklist, tips on home improvement and decorating, even help with your new home's weed-ridden excuse for a garden. The site is sold on you but not your pit bull. The best place to hunt down a rental is still in your local paper's classified ads.

Another megasite, MSN HomeAdvisor (homeadvisor.msn.com), offers such features as a step-by-step guide to finding and buying a home, virtual home tours, and links to insurance and financing information. You can also store your favorite listings and have new listings sent by e-mail.

It also pays to check individual agencies' sites, because they may have exclusive listings only they will sell. To find agency sites in your area, try a directory at one of the major portals. At Yahoo, for instance, clicking on Yellow Pages, then on Agents (under Real Estate) brings up an alphabetical list of agencies. If you've used Yahoo Yellow Pages

before, the location will be the one you selected the last time you used it. To look in another town, click on Change Location.

Keep in mind that these Web sites may not reveal the most complete and up-to-date offerings. Small agencies often lack the manpower to update their sites on a regular basis, so many of the listings may be off the mar-

ket or already sold. And just like many of the ads you see in print, Web-site listings may be intended to get you to pick up the phone. When you call, you may be told that "that one's sold, but we have others."

In some parts of the country, real-estate agencies have been slow to embrace the Web, so newspaper classifieds are still an important part of your search. Many local newspapers make their real-estate classified ads available on their Web sites, and the search tools they offer make it a lot easier than poring over paper ads.

In addition, you can find a wealth of classified ads and information directories at the major portals. At the Lycos Network's HotBot (www.hotbot.com), for instance, clicking on Business & Money and then Real Estate brings up a number of useful directories, including home builders and inspectors. You'll also find rental and FSBO listings. Both Lycos (www.lycos.com/realestate) and Yahoo (realestate. yahoo.com) offer real-estate guides that can be as comprehensive as some of the megasites.

FSBO listings are the toughest to find online, because most of the listings on the Web are offered through real-estate agents.

AFFORDABILITY CALCULATORS

How much house can you afford? Find out by plugging your financial information into one of these online calculators.

bankrate.com/brm/calc/afford_smm.asp
Bloomberg.com/money/loan/mtge_calc.html
FinanCenter.com financenter.com
Hugh's Mortgage and Financial Calculators www.interest.com/hugh/calc
Quicken.com quickenloans.quicken.com/Tools/Affordability/AffordQuery.asp

also provides information on the different types of mortgages, a Personal Planner that lets you store your favorite listings, and neighborhood research.

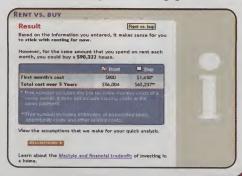
Realtor.com's apartment listings are rather anemic, though; we couldn't find a single listing in Bayside, N.Y. In fact, we couldn't even verify Bayside's existence. But we did find tips for creating a résumé for your pet—useful if your potential landlord

A Renter's Life for Me

ost of us have been brought up thinking it's better to own. But in today's market, that's not always true. Home prices are high, and mortgage rates

have been climbing. If your rent is low and you're pleased with your quality of life, you may be better off staying right where you are.

There's an easy way to find out. Just plug some information into a rent-vs.-buy calculator at one of the finance sites. At iOwn (www.iown.com), for instance, just click on Buy a Home, then Rent vs. buy, and fill in the fields. You may be surprised at the results.



REAL-ESTATE SITES

Because it's the seller, not the buyer, who pays the commission in real-estate transactions, you may be able to negotiate a better price by going directly to the home owner. Although it sometimes may seem like a realestate agent is working for you, the agent's fiduciary responsibility is to the seller, unless that agent agrees to represent both parties. Representation of both parties, known as dual agency, is rare, however. In most cases, the seller works exclusively for the home owner and is obligat-

ed to get the seller the best possible price.

If you want to buy your home directly from an owner, you can try one of the sites that list FSBO ads only. The trouble is, these sites typically don't have enough listings to be of any real value. For instance, when we searched the FSBO site for a \$400,001-to-\$500,000 home in Port Washington in Nassau County, Long Island,

we couldn't refine our search any further than Nassau. The search resulted in only five listings, none of which was in Port Washington. At byowner.com, we were able to refine our search to Port Washington, but the search turned up only one listing at any



price. By contrast, MLSLIRealtor.com had 53 listings in Port Washington. The best way to hunt FSBOs is still by perusing your local paper and by using the old-fashioned method of cruising a neighborhood in search of For Sale signs.

Cruising the neighborhood is also a good way to see if it's the kind of place you'd like to live. What types of stores are nearby? Are there any good restaurants? What about movie theaters? A couple of Web sites can save you some mileage in this area, too. Select a locality at CitySearch.com to find out all sorts of information about your new hometown, including restaurants, movie theaters, shopping, and recreation. For information of a more socioeconomic

nature, check the Where to Live section of Homefair.com. You can compare the cost of living, demographics, and schools in hundreds of U.S. and international cities, and even identify neighborhoods that have demographics similar to those of your own. At iOwn (www.iown.com), you'll also find

this information.

MORTGAGE RATES

Find out the going rate for a mortgage, nationally and in your area.

American Mortgage Onlinewww.amo-mortgage.com/rate.html bankrate.combankrate.com/brm/rate/mtg home.asp Bloomberg.com/markets/rates.html iOwnrateshop.iown.com/scripts/

crateshop.dll?center=Buy&MSPARTNER=stihpqr

Though the Web can't eliminate all the preliminary work, if you want to be sure to exhaust all avenues, it can save you days, even weeks, of driving-around time. With smart surfing, you can even accomplish in a few hours what could have taken a month's worth of weekends. You can tour dozens, maybe hundreds of homes online, and rule out many you would otherwise have had to see physically before being able to cross them off your list. Now you can pick up the phone and start making appointments.

ARE YOU (PRE)QUALIFIED?

Before you begin looking at actual homes, it's a good idea to get a prequalification or preapproval letter from a lender. You can do this on the Web for free at any mortgage site (see the sidebar "Online Lenders"), and you're under no obligation to obtain your loan from the site that pregualifies you.

In a seller's market, many real-estate agents won't even take a buyer to a listing without a prequalification letter, and some even require preapproval letters. While neither represents a loan commitment, the preapproval letter is more thorough, requiring such documentation as recent pay stubs, W-2 forms, bank statements, and possibly income tax returns. A lender may write a prequalification, on the other hand, with nothing more than a credit report and verbal income data from the borrower. Even if you're looking at a FSBO, a prequal letter earns you some negotiating clout with the seller. Just make sure the price listed in the

letter isn't more than you want to spend, or the seller may not be so willing to agree to a price below that amount.

MORTGAGE SURFING

Once you've found your dream house and the seller has accepted your offer, it's time to start shopping for a mortgage. This is another area where the Web can save you tons of time and possibly some money as well. You can't walk into a bank and fill out a loan

application at 3 a.m., but you can log onto the Internet and complete one online anytime. Plus, in many cases, rates are lower online, especially among online-only lenders, whose overhead costs are lower than those with a brick-and-mortar pres-

Unlike shopping for a home, where so many subjective factors come into play, your only concern when shopping for a mortgage is finding the lowest

possible rate. You may not think a quarter of a percentage point makes a differenceuntil you do the math. On a \$250,000 mortgage, for instance, the difference between 8 percent and 8.25 percent over 30 years amounts to nearly \$16,000. (For a quick, dothe-math-in-your-head calculation, figure you'll pay around \$7 per \$1,000 per month at a 7.5 percent interest rate and \$7.50 at 8.25 percent.)

This is why examining the rates of as many institutions as possible is so important,

ONLINE LENDERS

Apply for a mortgage online.

E-Loan.....www.eloan.com iOwnwww.iown.com LendingTreewww.lendingtree.com LoanWorks.....www.loanworks.com WingspanBank.comwingspanbank.com

and the Web lets you do this easily. You don't have to take time off from work to be sure you're there before 3 p.m.; just fill out a form at sites such as E-Loan (www.eloan.com), or LendingTree (www.lendingtree.com), at any time of the day or night, and you'll receive rates from multiple lending institutions in your geographic area. Most of these sites act as mortgage brokers, but some, such as E-Loan, act as both mortgage broker and lender,

searching and comparing the rates of more than 70 lenders and, depending on the state you're in, possibly throwing their own loan offerings into the ring.

Most traditional brick-and-mortar banks also let you apply for loans online. Check the Web sites of the major commercial banks, or look for local savings and loans in the yellow pages of your favorite portal.



various mortgage products they offer, and many sites, including bankrate.com and Fannie Mae's Homepath.com (www. homepath.com), offer glossaries that define some of the different types of mortgages. You'll learn, for instance, whether you're

better off with a fixedrate or an adjustablerate mortgage (ARM). Bankrate.com's glossary explains that the interest on an ARM can fluctuate, whereas your rate is locked in for the entire term with a fixed-rate mortgage.

As a rule, if mortgage rates are low, you're planning on living in your home for a long period of time, and you like the peace of mind of knowing your rate will never go up, most sites will recommend a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage. But if mortgage rates are high, you're not planning on staying in your new home long, and you anticipate making more money down the road, the lower interest rate an ARM offers may be more appealing. It may even enable you

to afford more home for your money.

Another mortgage term you should understand is points. Fannie Mae's Homepath.com defines a point as "a one-time charge by the lender for originating a loan." Put more simply, a point equals 1 percent of your mortgage amount. By paying points, you're prepaying part of your mortgage. No-points mortgages come with a higher interest rate, but if you're low on funds for the down payment, this could be just what you need.

If your down payment is less than 20 percent of your purchase price, however, you're required to buy mortgage insurance, a premium that could add around \$150 to your monthly expenses, depending on your mortgage amount. If you don't have the 20 percent, some lenders offer options that let



you share the down-payment cost with more than one lender. For instance, iOwn discusses details about 80-10-10 mortgages, whereby you take out one mortgage and put down 80 percent, and borrow the other 10 percent from another lender.

If the amount you wish to borrow is under \$252,700 for a single-family home, you may qualify for a Fannie Mae mortgage. Find out by checking Fannie Mae's Homepath.com. Even if you don't qualify, Homepath is an excellent resource for all aspects of home buying. The Getting Started section walks you through the initial stages of the home-buying process, from home selection to qualifying for a Fannie Mae mortgage. You'll also find property listings and an extensive glossary of real-estate terms.

Competition in the mortgage business has given rise to a number of other types of mortgage products as well. Keep in mind that whatever you're not paying up front (closing costs, points, down payment), you're likely paying on the other end by way of higher monthly payments. Just be sure you understand your total commitment before you sign on the dotted line.

IT'S CLOSING TIME

So you've found the home of your dreams, or at least one that doesn't give you nightmares, and you've gotten your mortgage commitment. The hard part is behind you, right? Not exactly. You may think you've steeled your financial nerves until you're locked in a room with a bunch of lawyers signing away the last of your life's savings. A home will probably be the biggest purchase you'll ever make, and there's no downplaying the stress level of a real-estate closing.

But because you've used the Web as your primary resource, after all the papers are signed and you've exhausted your supply of checks, you can be secure in the knowledge that you found a home you can afford at a fair price and a mortgage that is well within your means.

VIRTUAL HOUSE HUNTING
Homes for Sale by Owner
byowner.com FSBO
Megasites
CyberHomes www.cyberhomes.com Homenet
National Agencies
Century 21 Real Estate Corp
Portal Directories and Guides
HotBot directorydir.hotbot.lycos.com/business/real_estate Lycos Real Estate guidewww.lycos.com/realestate Yahoo directorydir.yahoo.com/business_and_economy/ real_estate
Yahoo Real Estate guiderealestate.yahoo.com

You can also click on one of the numerous banner ads that come up while you're searching for a home online.

LOAN LINGO

Once you have a sampling of loans to choose from, you can view online all the details of the loans, including points, closing costs, terms, any prepayment penalties, and the period of time for which the rate is good (referred to as the "lock period"). When you find a loan that suits your needs, you can apply online as well. If you're approved, the lender will mail you documents for your signature.

Before you apply for a mortgage, however, make sure you know your options and understand all the associated costs. Lenders' sites give you a rundown of the

WebBuyer

Site Reviews for Online Shopping

SPOOKY SITES

PAGE 179

PC SHOPPING SITES

PAGE 180

PC DIRECT VENDORS

PAGE 186

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

PAGE 192

FINANCIAL SERVICES

PAGE 192

PC RESOURCES

PAGE 193

SOFTWARE SITES

PAGE 194

ONLINE AUCTIONS

PAGE 196

SMALL-BUSINESS RESOURCES

PAGE 196

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

AGE 197

GAMERAS

PAGEIS

BOOKS & MUSIC

PAGE 199

decisions, decisions, decisions.

and not a wrong one in the bunch.





Includes Windows Millennium Edition — the home version of the world's favorite software.

"Monthly payment based on 13,99% APR. APR FOR QUALIFIED CUSTOMERS VARIES BY CREDITWORTHINESS OF CUSTOMER AS DETERMINED BY LENDER. Taxes and shipping charges extra. From American Investment Bank, NA to U.S. state residents (including D.C.) with approved credit. Availability may be limited in some states.

Prices, specifications, and availability may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges extra. and vary. Cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. U.S. only. Offer valid for Dell Home Systems Co. only. For a copy of our Guarantees or Limited Warranties, write Dell USA L.P., Attn: Warranties, One Dell Way, Round Rock, Texas 78682. "At-Home or on-site service provided via third-party contract with customer. Availability varies. Technician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. To receive Next-Business-Day service, Dell must notify the service provider before Spm (customer's time). Other conditions apply, "For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes, accessible capacity varies with operating environment. Download speeds limited to 53Kbps. Upload speeds are less (about 30Kbps) and vary by modem manufacturer and online conditions. Analog phone line and compatible severe required. "Microsoft's official launch date for Windows Me is September 14, 2000. Intel, the Intel Inside logo, and Pentium are registered trademarks, and Intel SpeedStep and Celeron are trademarks of Intel Corporation. MS, Microsoft, IntelliMouse, and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. ©2000 Dell Computer Corporation. All rights reserved.

Until now, choosing the perfect notebook could be a tricky decision. From mobility to price to out & out raw power, everyone is looking for something different. That's why our award-winning line of Inspiron™ notebooks offers a range of innovations and technological benefits. But whichever Inspiron you choose, they all have one thing in common. Our Standard Next-Business-Day On-site Service offering — just part of our award-winning service promise. Dell4me™ is all about helping you get the most out of your PC. A notebook customized to fit your needs is just one of the ways we're making it happen.

CHOOSE YOUR NOTEBOOK, THEN CUSTOMIZE IT EVEN MORE.

DELL** INSPIRON** 3800

Design and Affordability

Very affordable. Very lightweight. Not bad looking, either. It's beautifully designed and available in Forest Green, Sierra Maroon, Midnight Grey, and Tahoe Blue. You'll find it delivers quite a bit of digital bang for your hard-earned buck.

Best Buy, Budget Notebook Category PC World, June 2000

- Intel® Celeron™ Processor at 500MHz
- 14.1" XGA TFT Display
- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 6GB⁵ Ultra ATA TFT Hard Drive
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-M1 3D® Video
- 26.5WHr Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge® Technology
- MS° Works Suite 2000 MS° Windows® Me3s
- 1-Yr Limited Warranty²
- 1-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service⁴

\$1699 **E-VALUE CODE** 05871-800916

As low as \$46/Mo., for 48 Mos.17

DELL INSPIRON 5000e

Performance and Mobility

Introducing the newest member of the Dell™ Inspiron[™] family, the 5000e. With all the power, size, and mobility of its predecessor, this baby also has the NEW 15" Ultra XGA display and features 16MB ATI RAGE Mobility™ 128 3D® video. Both improve your view for a better overall experience.

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 700MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 15" Ultra XGA TFT Display
- 64MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 5GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 16MB ATI RAGE Mobility[™] 128 3D® Video
- 59WHr Li-Ion Battery
- Internal V.90 56K Capable⁶ FaxModem
- MS® Works Suite 2000 MS® Windows® Me3®
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty²
- 3-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service⁴

\$2599 © E-VALUE CODE 05871-800925a

As low as \$71/Mo., for 48 Mos.15

DELL INSPIRON 7500

Mobile Desktop

Need a portable desktop with a 15.4" screen and a NEW Intel® Pentium® III processor that delivers speeds up to 750MHz? Rarely do you encounter so much raw power concentrated into such a neat package.

CNET Editor's Choice Award, Inspiron™ 7500 G650VT, January 2000

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 750MHz Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology
- 15.4" Super XGA TFT Display
- 96MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 20GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Removable Combo 24X Max CD-ROM and Floppy Drive
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility[™]-P 3D® Video
- 79WHr Li-Ion Battery
- Internal V.90 56K Capable⁶ FaxModem
- MS® Works Suite 2000 MS® Windows® Me3®
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty²
- 3-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service⁴

E-VALUE CODE 05871-800931a

As low as \$87/Mo., for 48 Mos.17

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contact us today | 800.433.3497

www.dell4me.com

We tossed out the bricks. Threw away the mortar. Then disposed of the competition.



ransforming egghead into a pure Internet company has been great for our customers-but not so great for our competition. Fact is, egghead.com has taken over the top spot in many of the key rankings of the online world, including:

- #1 online consumer electronics shopping site
 - Nielsen//NetRatings, 2/00
- #1 retailer of technology products among US home web users
 - PC Data Online, 2/00
- **#1** in "ease of use" category
 - Gomez.com, Spring 2000
- #1 in average order size (dollar)
 - NextCard E-commerce Index, top 5 rated sites, January 2000

What's more, traffic is up more than 600%. So if you're looking for the best place to buy office and home technology products-as well as place your bids in our auction section -visit egghead.com today. It's your basic win/win/win/win situation.



WebBuyer

Scary Sites to See

Here are 20 Halloween destinations that provide a full array of gruesome goods and good, mean fun.

by Elaine X. Grant

h, Halloween, that special day of the year when you get to dress like a freak, act like a lunatic, and scare the socks off of little kids who ring your doorbell. And no one even calls the police!

Now's the time to start planning for fright night. First, you'll want to get into the spirit of the holiday with some history and spooky tales. Halloween on the Web (www. allhallowseve.com) spins a detailed history of the holiday and offers tips on makeup and trick-or-treating safety, as well as a create-your-own jacko'-lantern app and "true" ghost stories sent in by site visitors.

For an excellent overall guide to the frightening festivities, visit HauntWorld.com. The site is a smorgasbord of all things Halloween and includes useful components such as a list of haunted houses throughout the United States; an online store that sells makeup, gifts, masks, and movies; an auction section where you can buy and sell gruesome goods; tips on trick-or-treating safety; message boards; a Halloween search engine; and a list of links.

Similarly, Everything Halloween (www. everythinghalloween.com) lists links to sites specializing in haunted houses, games, costumes, and events. HalloweenMagazine.com collects links for costumes, makeup, recipes, books, and Halloween history. The winner for sheer number of links, Halloween Online (www.halloween-online.com), connects you with Halloween stores offering a wide range of products (we like the Fogmaster) and sites of questionable taste, such as the Guide to Halloween

Weddings (www.

halloweenweddings.com).

Sites focused on selling Halloween merchandise include The Chamber of Horrors (www. chamberofhorrors.com) and Halloween Outlet (www.halloweenoutlet. com), both of which aim to scare you into opening your wallet to buy costumes, props, masks, makeup, prosthetics, and party supplies. The best online shopping sites we found were Halloweenmart (www.halloweenmart.com), Haunted Planet (www.hauntedplanet.com), and Halloween Direct (www.halloweendirect.com). Halloweenmart and Haunted Planet both offer a wide selection of costumes. Haunted Planet also specializes in masks and highend haunted-house effects, while Halloween Direct sells more inexpensive and predictable props such as tarantulas and severed hands. If you like your Halloweens gruesome, Haunted Planet and Halloween Direct both have all sorts of horrible things in store, including bags of flesh, tombstones, fangs, and (perhaps the most dis-

gusting of all) rotten heads. While most of these sites have no shortage of costume ideas and products for sale, one site focuses on nothing else. The

Costume Page (users.aol.com/nebula5/ hallocst.html) offers a long list of costume-related sites, including ideas, patterns, safety tips, and even articles. Some of the material is a bit dated, but true scariness never goes out of style.

If you prefer jack-o'-lanterns to decomposing body parts, several sites cater to milder sensibilities. For those who need to practice their pumpkin-carving skills, **Pumpkin Masters**

(www.pumpkinmasters.com) serves up step-by-step carving instructions accompanied by photos and sells carving kits, knives, goop scoopers, patterns, and kits for kids. If you consider yourself a particularly

gifted pumpkin sculptor, the site also awards prizes for the best craftsmanship. Need advice from an expert before you enter that contest? Visit Designer Pumpkins (www.

designerpumpkins.com), which sells a book and video by pumpkin carver extraordinaire Jerry Ayers.

Not everyone, however, is cut out for carving a messy pumpkin. Fortunately, there are Fun-Kins, artificial pumpkins (\$29.95 each), that can be

sculpted like the real deal. Check out www. funkins.com to see how you can create realistic-

After the knives are put away, direct the kids to Kid's Domain Halloween (www.kidsdomain.com/ holiday/halloween) for software, clip art, games, craft projects, sounds, personalized stories, lists of Halloween books, and jokes. (Did you hear what happened to the boy and girl vampires? They loved

looking jack-o'-lanterns without making a mess.

Another good site for young children and their parents is Halloween Tricks and Treats (www.night.net/halloween), which has stories, poems, songs, games, and recipes for party favors and treats.

So you have your jack-o'-lantern, your costume, your props, and your makeup at hand. Now you need some scary music (and we don't mean the Beastie Boys). It's a musthave for those homemade haunted houses, and

CDNow (www.cdnow.com) carries a staggering array of Halloween titles, including sound effects, movie soundtracks, stories, and Halloween songs.

For those who are a bit fanatic about the whole Halloween thing and want to take a trip to celebrate the occasion, check out HalloweenNet (www. halloweennet.com). In addition to providing a wealth of tips on how to make the best haunted house and a list of scary movies and TV specials, HalloweenNet also lists real-life

haunted places such as Transylvania and the Winchester Mansion in San Jose, Calif., and information on how to get there.

If you just can't bring yourself to celebrate the scary season with candy and costumes, at least send an e-mail card, several of which are available at **UNICEF Halloween Fun** (www.supportunicef. org/halloween) and Kid's Domain Halloween. Happy haunting!







WebBuyer



SITE REVIEWS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

COMPILED BY KEVIN SAVETZ AND ABIGAIL CRANE

PC SHOPPING SITES

The sites in this listing sell products from multiple manufacturers. See the sites under "PC Direct Vendors," or check the Computer Shopper Source Directory (cgi.zdnet.com/slink?8145), for more information on PC manufacturers offering only their own brands (such as Dell and Gateway).

aberdeeninc.com

volume pricing • smooth navigation • easy ordering limited software selection

Built for the savvy consumer who craves technical information, Aberdeen offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories.

accessmicro.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Shoppers will enjoy the selection at Access Micro, which offers 45,000 items ranging from memory to T1 routers. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors.



www.applied-computer.com

smooth navigation

nandling fee on orders under \$200

Selling PCs and supplies since 1984, Applied Computer promises to match or beat any advertised price. The company stocks 800,000 products-check the site's list of the 1,000 most popular ones.

blackbox.com

smooth navigation

Specializing in cabling and networkconnectivity products, Black Box's extensive 900-page catalog of storage, LAN, switch, surge-protection, and other accessories can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

price-matching policy • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You'll find everything from computers and software to electronics, books, movies, music, and video games at this monstrous, multifaceted site. Buy.com sells a whopping 850,000 items. Despite the site's mind-blowing selection, shopping is fast and efficient.

cablestogo.com

hard-to-find tools and test equipment

\$30 minimum order requirement

Cables To Go sells every conceivable cable, cord, or wire your PC might need, from standard SCSI to esoteric system-specific cables. You'll also find networking products and all sorts of adapters.

cdw.com

- list of rebates and coupons
- · business leasing options available
- · smooth navigation · easy ordering

CDW offers an impressive array of hardware and software. The comparison tool lets shoppers create side-byside comparisons in many product categories.

compuplus.com

easy ordering • good return policy

Comp-U-Plus highlights its customer service, offering a 30-day money-back guarantee and free technical support. Its catalog isn't the biggest, but plenty

of name brands are represented, and prices are reasonable.

compusa.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

CompUSA is a well-organized site offering a fair amount of PC hardware, accessories, and software, with electronics and video-game gadgets rounding out the selection. Don't overlook the site's clearance section.

computability.com

handy side-by-side productcomparison tool • smooth navigation easy ordering

Beginning its mail-order business in 1982, ComputAbility has aged considerably better than the Commodore 64 you bought that year. The site offers desktop, notebook, and handheld computers, plus a wide variety of peripherals and software.

computer.com

easy ordering

Interested in buying components and piecing together your own PC? Computercomputer.com sells bare-bones systems that make a good starting point.

computers4sure.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

The 15 well-stocked departments at Computers4Sure.com include networking equipment, peripherals, PDAs, scanners, and more—the selection spans 60,000 products. Fast and intuitive, the site delivers handy features

www.officemax.com

Whether you need a palette of PDAs or just a box of low-tech paper clips, you'll find it at OfficeMax. The site sells an enormous variety of paper products, writing instruments, furniture, office machines, and technology products. To simplify supply shopping, you can enter the manufacturer and model of your fax machine, copier, or printer, and the site will generate a list of compatible itemstoner, paper, and so on.



OfficeMax also provides useful articles (such as "Stress Reduction for Entrepreneurs") and buying guides (on topics ranging from buying envelopes to choosing a CD burner). A simple all-in-one rebate form makes it easy to apply for manufacturers' discounts and other special offers. In addition, some products feature no-forms instant rebates.

OfficeMax offers free next-day delivery on orders totaling more than \$50. Many product categories are covered by a low-price guarantee, which promises to match competitors' prices and give you a credit for 55 percent of the difference.

OfficeMax partners with affiliates in the MaxSolutions section of the site to provide financial services, a unified messaging center, and printing services. Registered users can access My OfficeMax, a centralized tool for maintaining shipping addresses, billing information, and other account details. A complete history of past orders is available.

OFFICEMAX

Main focus: Office supplies, furniture, technology products

Additional categories: Software, business services

Number of products offered: 20,000

for choosy shoppers. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Special Offers and Clearance pages.

computershopper.com



smooth navigation

Computer Shopper's own computerbuying site, computershopper.com, provides access to product reviews. interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections for the



computersurplusoutlet.com



categories.

consignment service

Frugal shoppers and do-it-yourselfers will feel at home at Computer Surplus Outlet, a computer hardware liquidator. The company sells closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items at bargain-basement prices. You can find complete, assembly-required Pentium systems for less than \$100.

cqk.com



smooth navigation

Designed for folks who know what they want, Computer Quick offers plainbox, best-buy, and closeout merchandise in addition to a selection of more than 90,000 items in regular stock.

cyberrebate.com

- "100% Off" tab shows 300 products whose rebates equal their cost. smooth navigation • easy ordering
- · good return policy
- prebates take 10 to 14 weeks to process

CyberRebate.com only sells products that come with money-back rebates. You'll find a small selection of computer accessories and software. In addition, the site offers electronics, office supplies, toys, and kitchen items.

cyberwarehouse.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

may take up to three days to ship

REVIEWS If you're the kind of shopper who can't

pass up a bargain-basement sale or an outlet mall, this site may be for you. CyberWarehouse offers PCs, monitors, printers, and other peripherals.

www.dalco.com

international and APO/FPO orders · smooth navigation

Dalco stocks everything from motherboards to monitors. Bargain hunters will want to start with this site's specials, which are shown on the home page and change regularly.

www.damark.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

Damark offers a variety of PCs and notebooks, as well as accessories. digital cameras, and home electronics. Factory-serviced items are available, and the outlet area delivers low prices on items in short supply.

direct411.com



easy ordering

Direct411 offers an impressive selection of 50,000 in-stock hardware and software products. The catalog includes servers, memory upgrades, storage devices, digital cameras, and software.

dirtcheapdrives.com

detailed archive of technicalsupport information • quantity discounts available . smooth navigation • easy ordering

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. Dirt Cheap Drives offers deals on hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, drive arrays, and hard-to-find laptop storage. This 10-year-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and other accessories.

ecost.com

same-day shipment on most orders

photos and warranty details for most

products

smooth navigation • easy ordering The eCost.com catalog spans the full realm of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, software, and games. Featured specials in each category point shoppers to the best deals, and fastidiously organized subcategories help them find the exact products they need.

egghead.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Egghead.com shoppers can browse the hardware, software, and electronics superstores, or check out the deals on surplus computer merchandise. In addition, the site also sells home electronics, sports and fitness merchandise, and travel packages.



electrified.com

30-day guarantee on all items • se habla español • good return policy

Looking for deep discounts on older laptops, notebooks, monitors, and printers? Electrified specializes in products that are discontinued, second-inventory, refurbished, off-lease, or otherwise not state-of-the-art. Systems range from new Pentium II laptops to under-\$200 used 486s.

elinux.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

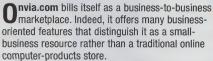
The eLinux.com site offers hardware and software for users of the Linux operating system. Desktop and notebook systems for sale here have been tested with Linux and don't come bundled with that "other" OS.

firstsource.com

real-time online customer service · smooth navigation · easy ordering

Focused on the technology needs of businesses, Firstsource offers a broad range of choices in computer hardware, rack-mount systems, network tools,

onvia.com



The site's selection of computer hardware, software, and office products spans 37,000 items. In-stock products are shipped within one to two



days of the order, and frequent free shipping deals help keep transaction costs down. Shoppers are covered by the company's 30-day price-protection guarantee: Any purchase can be returned for any reason for a full refund within 30 days.

The site's Request for Quote marketplace is a small-businessservices trading hub that you can use to seek out the services of a copywriter, an insurance provider,

or any of a dozen other types of professionals. Buying guides will help you make an informed choice, whether you're in search of a janitor or a photocopier service technician.

The Auctions area allows members to buy and sell inventory in categories that include aircraft, real estate, and industrial equipment. The site's informative News & Tools section features business news, expert advice, product reviews, and community forums. You can even zoom in on business news in your particular industry or region.

ONVIA.COM

Main focus: Computer and office products

Additional categories: Auctions, business services Number of products offered: 37,000

Areas of development: Web hosting for small businesses

REVIEWS

phone systems, wiring, and business software.

gogocity.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

You'll get beyond GoGoCity.com's funny name when you see its excellent selection of computer hardware. You'll find desktop and notebook computers. peripherals, software, and PC accessories of all types. Detailed product information, often with pictures, rounds out the catalog.

www.handgear.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Handgear offers a small selection of Palm hardware, plus other mobilecomputing accessories and software.

insight.com

separate sites for the U.S., Canada, Germany, and the U.K. · smooth navigation · easy ordering

With more than 100,000 items, Insight offers an impressive and easy-tonavigate catalog of hardware and software products. More than 100 free newsletters feature new-product news, closeout specials, and tech news,

www.jandr.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Whether you're shopping for an Aptiva or an iMac, hardware and accessories abound at J&R Computer World, making this a one-stop shop for many. You'll also find a huge selection of digital and traditional film cameras.

laptoptravel.com

smooth navigation

Laptop Travel sells portable-computing and international travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters and couplers, and security accessories. You'll find traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

thelinuxstore.com

smooth navigation

If your PC is "penguin-powered," The Linux Store might be your place to shop. The site offers a small selection of hardware and software that's compatible with the popular alternative operating system. The community area offers Linux news, free downloads, and Web links.

mcglen.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

McGlen Micro's specialized searches can help you find memory and other accessories compatible with your computer, printer, and copier. Shoppers can design a custom system to be built and shipped in two days.

megahaus.com

ifetime technical support on all products . CD-mastering and other utility software . smooth navigation

MegaHaus calls itself "the drive authority." It offers a wide variety of storage solutions, including hard drives, DVD drives, RAID, and removable storage. A technical-information area features FAQs and specifications on hardware ranging from DVD players to drive brackets.

mei-microcenter.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compag, eMachines, Hewlett Packard, and PowerSpec. There's also a small selection of peripherals, Rummage around the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

memman.com

all memory carries a lifetime warranty • smooth navigation • good return policy

When it's time to upgrade the memory in your desktop or laptop, don't forget Memory Man. Besides memory chips. the site sells processors, motherboards, hard drives, heat sinks, and batteries for many types of notebooks.

memory4less.com

company tests all products shipped . smooth navigation

Memory4Less offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM, including older, hard-to-find types. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, it will tell you.

The site also sells CPUs, motherboards, and laptop hard drives.

microx-press.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

MicroX-Press offers detailed information about most products, as well as a handy "E-mail me when this product is priced at..." feature and a configuration tool. Customers are invited to rate and review products they've tried.

www.mobile-mania.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters of all sorts are available for folks on the go at Mobile Mania.

mobileplanet.com



smooth navigation • easy ordering

Offering gadgets for mobile professionals, MobilePlanet is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys. The selection includes handheld and notebook computers, PDAs, wireless communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners-plus countless accessories for each.

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from nine manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers can pick the perfect innards for their new PCs at Motherboards.com. This Web store offers CPUs, memory, graphics cards, drives, and other internal essentials.

www.mwave.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Multiwave Direct's friendly site sells a multitude of hardware and software products. In addition to PC systems and peripherals, this Web store stocks notebook accessories, videoconferencing equipment, and network tools.

www.necx.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering \$25 surcharge for phone orders

NECX offers all manner of hardware.

accessories, and software. The Showcases section highlights products in specialty categories, such as PDAs or USB peripherals. The How to Buy guides offer impartial advice on selecting and installing common PC add-ons.

neutronet.com

purchases earn credit points toward your next order . smooth navigation • easy ordering

Neutron Computers carries thousands of computer systems and peripherals from nearly 400 different manufacturers and distributors. The site's handy toolbox offers easy access to best buys, help for first-time buyers, and a massive manufacturer directory.

www.notebooksuperstore.com

devoted exclusively to portable computers . easy ordering

Notebook Superstore sells more than 90 different laptop models from eight manufacturers. You'll see technical details about each model, and a comparison tool helps you zero in on the best portable for your needs. Corporate accounts receive lease options and volume discounts.



123cdc.com

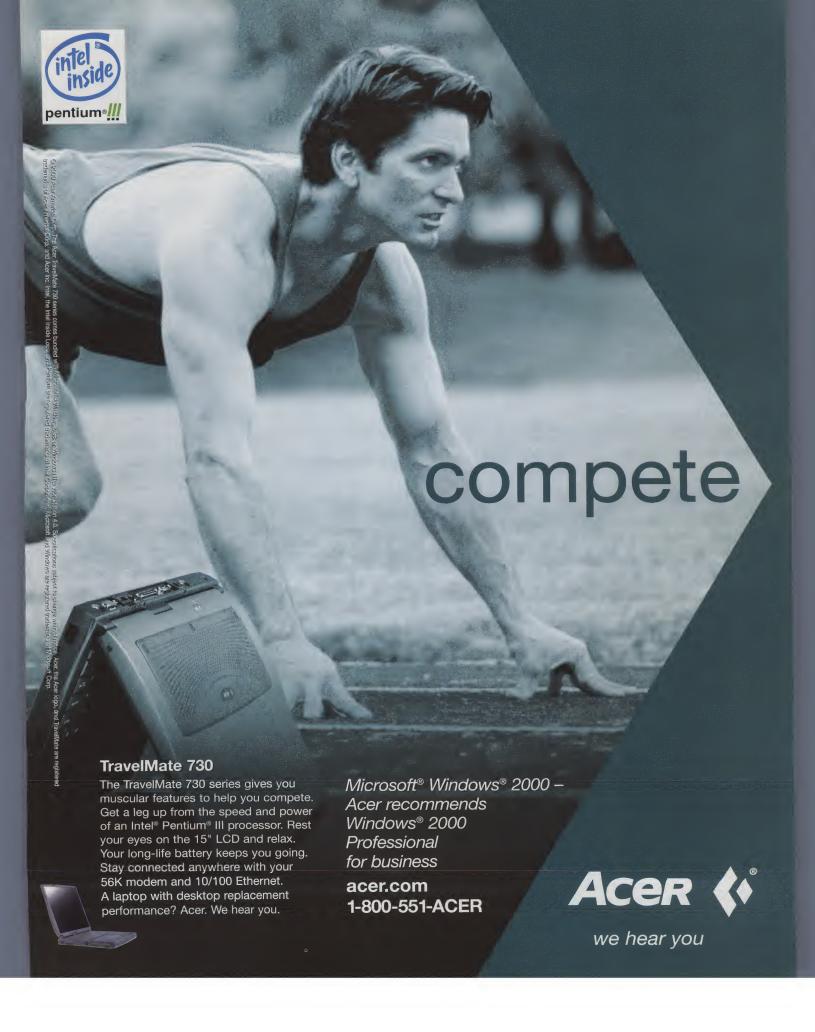
smooth navigation • easy ordering

Computer Discount Center offers a wide variety of PC add-ons, including storage, digital cameras, and displays. Shoppers will find competitive prices and detailed product information.

officedepot.com

free next-day delivery on orders of more than \$50 within local trading areas • smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

Office Depot sells everything for the office: file folders to filing cabinets, briefcases to bookcases. The site's computer category offers a selection of prebuilt machines from major



manufacturers. Office Depot provides free downloadable business forms, letter templates, and spreadsheet templates.

www.officemax.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 180.

onvia.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 181.

outpost.com

Best Site winner this month. See below.

www.palmgear.com

mailing lists offer news, specials, and user tips • smooth navigation

Palm-device users will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial downloadable programs at PalmGear H.Q. The site features lists of the newest Palm programs, as well as essential software picks. Shoppers can buy handheld hardware and accessories, including carrying cases and styli.

www.thepartsfinder.com

minimum \$75 order

A friendly site that uses a graphical interface to simplify finding CPU fans. power supplies, cables, and screws, The Parts Finder is targeted at computer hobbyists and corporate buyers. Even the most mundane parts, such as bezels, fans, and batteries, are listed.

pcconnection.com



smooth navigation • easy ordering

In business for more than 15 years, PC Connection offers good deals on a colossal variety of products. Smart Selectors ease the searching process for shoppers looking for systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.

pcmall.com

free lifetime technical support · smooth navigation · easy ordering



REVIEWS

Many folks are familiar with PC Mall's thick, colorful catalog, and the online version is just as dense. PC Mall has a vast selection of computers, hardware, and software.

pcprogress.com



smooth navigation

If you're in the market for PC components and peripherals, check out PC Progress. The site specializes in costeffective memory, with a lifetime warranty. You'll find a large selection of memory, including notebook, iMac, and printer RAM.

pcstop.com

This purveyor of hardware and software offers 50,000 computer-related products from 1,300 manufacturers. PC Stop's unusual interface makes shoppers start with a search-you can't just browse.

pcwonders.com

corporate and educational accounts available • smooth navigation easy ordering

At pcWonders.com, you'll find more than 90,000 hardware and software products. Additional categories include car audio, home electronics, PDAs, and bargain blowouts.

pczone.com

printable rebate coupons

 smooth navigation • easy ordering handling fee on smaller orders

PC Zone boasts an impressive product selection of all things PC-related, including desktops, notebooks, printers, monitors, storage devices, CPU upgrades, and network equipmentplus PDAs, digital cameras, and handheld MP3 players. You'll also find links to a clearance area and other stores: Mac Zone and Zones Business Solutions.

provantage.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers. The selection includes software, hardware, books, and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor the products' prices and availability.

www.qualityclick.com

leasing options • easy ordering good return policy

The Quality Click Web store covers all the basics for the PC user, including hardware, networking supplies, accessories, and software. Technical support is available through a toll-free phone number, fax, or e-mail, and there is sales support over live chat.

shopper.cnet.com

The CNET Shopper search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The site tracks the prices of more than 200,000 products in 100 stores.

shoppingplanet.com



Do-it-yourselfers will appreciate Shopping Planet's inventory of barebones systems, add-on cards, and kits. An arm of the site that specializes in software and hardware for the Linux operating system is available at shoppingplanet.com/cm/linux.asp.



www.sparco.com

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Sparco's catalog of more than 130,000 products makes it simple to shop for computer equipment. Looking for that something extra? Check out the list of products that come bundled with "free

www.spidergear.com

Spider Gear offers new and refurbished computers, cameras, home audio and video products, car-audio

outpost.com

he breadth of products at Outpost.com will impress. For instance, the site sells a wide selection of computer hardware and software, personal electronics, and office products. The selection of PCs includes preconfigured desktop and notebook

computers from Acer, Apple, Compaq, and other major manufacturers. A full complement of peripherals, accessories, and software is also available.

DOOR A CAMP

The Innovations area offers home and garden, health and fitness, travel, and auto products. In the Games section you'll find playtime activities for PC, Mac, and console

gamers. Under the Electronics tab are home audio and video products, camcorders, phones, and portable electronics. The Cameras section peddles traditional and digital cameras, telescopes, and digital-imaging products.

Regardless of what you're shopping for, you'll enjoy a detailed description of each item that includes features, system requirements, and images. And Outpost.com does more than present itself well: It works hard to earn customer satisfaction with

policies like a 30-day money-back guarantee and free overnight delivery. We placed an order one Friday afternoon and were greeted the very next day by an Airborne Express truck delivering the goods. For those in a big hurry, Outpost offers same-day delivery in selected areas, but you'll have to pay for it.

OUTPOST.COM

Main focus: Computers and software

Additional categories: Electronics, cameras, business products Number of products offered: 170,000

Areas of development: Site to offer custom-configured Micron PCs



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At State Street Direct's Web store, shoppers will discover a huge selection of consumer electronics in addition to computers and imaging products. Digital photographers will find many items of interest.



staples.com

peruse your history of past purchases, even months later . liberal price-matching policy . smooth navigation . good return policy

Even if a Staples store is just down the block, you might prefer this elegant Web site when shopping for computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often,



you can set up personalized lists to avoid filling out a new form every



2for1inkjet.com

free shipping on orders of six or more items, or at least \$200 • smooth navigation . good return policy

If your printer is putting you in the poorhouse, pay a visit to 2 For 1 Inkjet, where you'll find two-for-one supplies for every brand of inkjet and laser printer, copier, and fax machine.

3re.com

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Specializing in used computers and rebuilt electronic equipment, 3Re.com takes open-box returns from original equipment manufacturers and repairs and repackages the machines. Offerings include desktops, notebooks, printers, monitors, network equipment, and software.

tccomputers.com

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In business since 1988, TC Computers sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and name-brand peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards-it tests each one prior to shipping and bundles a step-by-step installation video.

tcwo.com

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Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet Center offers "wholesale computer parts to the public." The selection is small—you may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives-but the prices are fantastic. Browse the selection or print out a complete price sheet for easy reference.

techstore.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

TechStore offers hardware in dozens of categories, ranging from CPU upgrades to storage devices.

The site also offers a wide range of software-everything from Microsoft applications to children's



thortek.com

smooth navigation

An array of computer accessories awaits ThorTek shoppers, including hard drives, notebook upgrades, peripherals, and software.

tigerdirect.com

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TigerDirect's site offers custom-built computers, tested and shipped within 48 hours. Shoppers in the mood for an adventure can order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit.



trudata.com

library of useful free software downloads . smooth navigation

True Data Technology's selection spans desktops, laptops, and palmtops, with an exceptional catalog of motherboards, hard drives, and other upgrade accessories. The site also features communication essentials for businesses, including DSL equipment and telephony products.

www.usbstuff.com

Looking for gadgets to plug into your new Universal Serial Bus-equipped computer? USB Stuff has it all, including digital cameras, CD-RW drives, printers, modems, hubs, input devices, cables, and adapters. A sister site at www.firewirestuff.com stocks IEEE 1394/FireWire-compatible hardware.

usedcomputer.com

index of nonprofit organizations accepting computer donations

Used Computer Mall is a marketplace

for used computer equipment. **Shoppers** can list hardware to sell or look for



items to buy using the free classified ads. The site can also help you appraise equipment.

warehouse.com

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The five "warehouses" under MicroWarehouse's roof sell PC hardware and software, Mac products, networking components, and supplies. The site provides corporate, educational, and government accounts. Business leases are available.

PC DIRECT VENDORS

axissys.com

The Axis Systems Web store offers a best-price guarantee on its preconfigured notebooks, servers, desktops, and workstations.

buyabs.com

systems available with Linux preinstalled • smooth navigation good return policy

Offering exceptional customer support on quality desktop and notebook systems is the goal at ABS. Shoppers can custom-configure a wide variety of PCs.

buy-atlas.com

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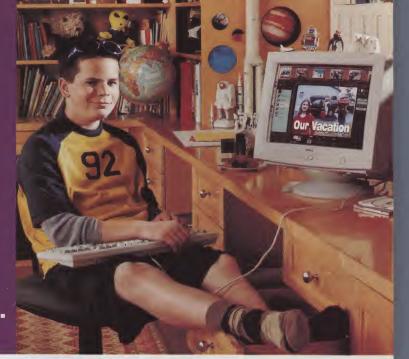
The Atlas Micro site sells a variety of preconfigured desktop PCs. Buyers can select from computers built around Pentium III, Celeron, and AMD processors.

cybermaxpc.com

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CyberMax offers AMD- and Intel-based systems in a wide variety of configurations to suit almost every need. The

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- 12X Max DVD-ROM Drive
- SB Live! Value Digital
- Altec Lansing® ACS-340™ Speakers with Subwoofer
- V.90 56K Capable® PCI Telephony Modem for Windows®
- IEEE 1394 PCI Card with MGI VideoWave® III Video Editing SW, Dell™ Edition
- MS° Works Suite 2000 MS° Windows° Me³⁹
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty² 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

E-VALUE CODE 05866-500915v

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- Altec Lansing® ACS-340™ Speakers with Subwoofer
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Prices, specifications, and availability may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges extra, and vary. Cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. U.S. only. Offer valid for Dell Home Systems Co. only. 2For a copy of our Guarantees or Limited Warranties, write Dell USA L.P., Attn: Warranties, One Dell Way Round Rock, Texas 78682, "At-Home or on-site service provided via third-party contract with customer. Availability varies. Technician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. To receive Next-Business-Day service, Dell must notify the service provider before 5pm (customer's time). Other conditions apply. For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes; accessible capacity varies with operating environment. Download speeds limited to 53Kbps. Upload speeds are less (about 30Kbps) and vary by modem manufacturer and online conditions. Analog phone line and compatible server required. **Online backup services provided by third-party agreement with the customer. Limited to 20MB of storage; additional space available at additional charge. Dell is not responsible for lost data. 16 Software, packaging, or documentation may differ from retail versions. ™For rebate details and coupons, call 800-728-9665 for HP. 38 Microsoft's official launch date for Windows Me is September 14, 2000. Intel, the Intel Inside logo, and Pentium are registered trademarks, and Intel SpeedStep and Celeron are trademarks of Intel Corporation. MS, Microsoft, IntelliMouse, and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. HP and DeskJet are registered trademarks and OpenView is a trademark of Hewlett-Packard Corporation. Trinitron is a registered trademark of Sony Corporation. ©2000 Dell Computer Corporation. All rights reserved.

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ibm.com/shop

- Linux available on laptop models
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Once synonymous with the phrase "personal computer," **IBM** still pushes the envelope. Its site offers business and home computers, notebooks, servers, thin clients, and the networking equipment to hook them all together.

kaypro.com

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Kaypro's first computer, released in the early '80s, used a Z-80 processor and ran the long-forgotten CP/M operating system. Today, the company's Web site sells decidedly more modern desktop

computers, allowing shoppers to customconfigure Pentium III systems.



micronpc.com

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nutrend.com

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www.quantex.com

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sagernotebook.com

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Specializing in portable computers, Sager offers a variety of notebookcomputing options, from budgetminded machines to speedy multimedia units. The one-year warranty includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee.

shopacer.com

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shopprostar.com

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store.apple.com

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tiny.com

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ranges from beginner to professional
models.



vaiodirect.sel.sony.com

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www.winbook.com

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csg.sprint.com/internet

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free.msn.com

Displaying a recently revamped interface, MSN Internet Access costs \$21.95 per month for unlimited access, and the first month is free. You'll also find more than 800 U.S. and international access numbers. The service is not available for Mac users. MSN provides 12MB for Web pages.

www.mciworld.com

MCI WorldCom offers more than 750 local access numbers across the United States. It costs \$19.95 for up to 150 hours of access each month (\$3 less if you are an MCI long-distance customer). Additional online time is 99 cents an hour.

www.newaol.com

Known for its ease of use, America Online is the nation's most popular ISP. It offers many pricing plans, including one for \$21.95 per month that gives unlimited access. Extras include members-only forums, 14MB of Web-page space, and seven e-mailboxes.

prodigy.com

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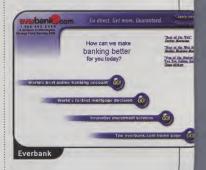
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Hoover's Online offers countless resources for financial research. Free tools include daily financial headlines and the Stock Screener.

ino.com

option chains • free end-of-theday updates by e-mail • smooth navigation

Devoted to futures, options, and equities trading, **Ino.com** offers a comprehensive site that includes daily financial



headlines, guotes and charts, and lively forums.

kiplinger.com

forums let users ask questions and discuss financial topics . financial software and videos • smooth navigation

Kiplinger.com contains a vast array of financial information. Departments include taxes, insurance, investments, and home. Each area includes several articles and columns



schwab.com

24-hour customer service by phone and e-mail . special services for high-volume traders

Online investors can get help planning for college, retirement, or a rainy day at Charles Schwab. This site offers myriad investing options, as well as research and planning services.

stockmaster.com

create custom investment profiles · message boards for investment discussions . smooth navigation

StockMaster will tell you the trading price and details of any stock or invest-

ment fund, providing instant graphs of that stock's activity. A subscription service provides



access to Baseline Company Profiles of more than 8,000 companies.

wallstreetcity.com

intuitive explanations of stock trends • free 30-day trial

Wall Street City's free services include quotes and graphs, real-time market commentary, and analyst reviews. Paying a monthly subscription fee adds real-time quotes, access to historical pricing data, and portfolio monitoring.

waterhouse.com

offers checking accounts with electronic bill payment

At TD Waterhouse's Web site, the money-minded will find brokerage, banking, and mutual-fund services. Waterhouse makes company news, reports, and charts freely available to investors with inquiring minds. Online stock trading costs a flat \$12 per transaction.

windowonwallstreet.com

WindowOnWallStreet.com offers professional-level stock trading services, including real-time quotes, dynamically updated charts, real-time option chains, and news. The service costs \$79.95 per month and requires you to install a desktop Internet client.

wingspanbank.com



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One of the new breed of Internet banks, WingspanBank.com offers a full range of banking, loan, brokerage, and insurance services. Convenient banking

options include interestbearing



checking accounts with direct deposit, as well as online bill-payment services.

www.wsrn.com

stock screener . links to publications on economy, equity, and markets

Wall Street Research Net offers thousands of links to help professional and private investors perform research on companies and mutual funds, as well as locate important economic data. Brokerage reports and historical stockprice data are available for a fee.

PC RESOURCES

cablemodeminfo.com

helps you find a cable-ready ISP

Internet addicts considering upgrading to a cable modem—as well as users who have already made the jump-will find a cornucopia of information at Cablemodeminfo.com. You'll find reviews of cable-modem hardware and tips on sharing a modem between PCs.

dailyedeals.com

smooth navigation

Before you place an order at your favorite e-commerce site, open a window to DailyeDeals. Its coupon pages offer coupon codes that will instantly shave \$5 to \$20 off the bottom line at major online retailers. The First Time area links to sites that offer substantial discounts to first-time customers.

dcresource.com

message board • links to digitalcamera stores

The Digital Camera Resource Page is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers will enjoy the FAQ page, buyer's guide, and reviews.

dealtime.com

DealTime Mobile service lets you compare prices from a cell phone or Palm device • smooth navigation

DealTime is an independent comparison-shopping service that helps you decide where to buy online. The site aggregates prices from hundreds of merchants, auctions, and classified sites.

www.expertcity.com

smooth navigation

currently no support for Mac or Unix operating systems

Expertcity promises live, 24-hour computer assistance from real human beings. When you pose a question, experts across the Internet bid for your business. Read their profiles, compare prices, then choose the expert you like.

56k.com

downloads of the latest modem firmware . smooth navigation

Don't buy a new modem until you've visited 56K Modem Central. Start with the primer on 56Kbps modems, learn the difference between technologies, then use the price shopper to find a model at the best price.



www.ftc.gov

smooth navigation

The Federal Trade Commission's Web site is packed with useful information for consumers. The content covers the spectrum of consumer fraud and how

to avoid it-online and offline. Articles address online auctions and protecting yourself when shopping on the Net.





gomez.com

smooth navigation

Gomez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel shopping to online brokers. Read other customers' reviews and check their ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.



help-site.com

links to 1,000 documents

smooth navigation

Help-Site is a great place to find FAQ lists, tutorials, manuals, and official as well as unofficial support. You'll find documentation on DOS, Windows, OS/2, and even Unix and VAX/VMS systems.

helptalk.com



smooth navigation

Helptalk offers free assistance for most Windows software and hardware. The site offers 30 message boards where you can ask questions about applications, operating systems, and programming.

modemhelp.com



smooth navigation

ModemHelp provides technical support for modem users and a hearty list of



links to other modem-related sites. You'll find information on upgrading modems, diagnostic tools, tutorials, and discussion forums.

nextag.com

product reviews available

· smooth navigation

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

productreviewnet.com



smooth navigation

Product ReviewNet collects abstracts of all sorts of products, including computers, appliances, sports equipment, and automobiles. Each abstract includes a citation (for magazine articles) or a link (for online reviews). The site includes a handy list of online buying guides.

www.thepubliceye.com

customer-satisfaction database smooth navigation

Find Internet businesses that deliver the best service-and avoid the ones that don't-with ePublicEye.com, a customer-service rating site. The site uses secret shoppers who patronize Internet businesses, conducting audits and rating the service of each business.

rammatters.com

Flash 4 plug-in required for maximum effects

RAM Matters humorously explains how adding memory to your computer will make you more productive, and, so the site claims, better-looking. You'll get help in determining the type of memory your computer requires, plus installation tips.

www.scambusters.com



Internet ScamBusters is a site and a newsletter aiming to help Net users avoid getting cheated. Each newsletter focuses on a single type of scam, ranging from the merely annoying to the downright dangerous. Scams that target online shoppers are also covered.

REVIEWS

usb.org

message board fields questions smooth navigation

Check this site for technical information about the Universal Serial Bus, as well as answers to frequently asked questions and information about devices that use the bus. There's information for end users as well as developers.

windrivers.com



smooth navigation

WinDrivers.com is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. The site also provides links to antivirus updates and BIOS upgrades.

www.worldowindows.com



hundreds of downloadable drivers smooth navigation

World O' Windows is a collection of useful news, resources, and tips about current and future versions of Microsoft Windows. Information and user tips abound. The site can be invaluable if you're considering upgrading or if your recent upgrade is causing problems.



SOFTWARE SITES

accountingshop.com

get credit for your old QuickBooks or Peachtree software when you upgrade • smooth navigation

The Accounting Shop Web store focuses on accounting software. Shoppers can choose from an extensive catalog of high-end, midrange, and small-business packages. Easy-tounderstand charts let you compare

chumbo.com

If you're looking for a one-stop shop for software, visit Chumbo.com. It's stocked with an assortment of business and developer tools, utilities, graphics applications, games, children's software, and home and reference programs. In addition

to tons of Windows and Mac programs, the site features a Linux Store area that sells applications for the popular alternative OS. You'll also find an array of DVD movies here, in categories ranging from animé to

western.



A special calendar keeps you informed about upcoming software and DVD releases; you can preorder these items for shipment the day they are released. The Rebate Center features links to software with money-saving deals from the manufacturer. And if you're looking for a software

gift, check the Staff Picks page,

which offers suggestions from software experts-and their pets.

Our order was shipped via two-day FedEx for a nominal \$3.95 shipping fee. The My Chumbo feature let us track the status of the order and review a complete order history.

СНИМВО.СОМ

Main focus: Computer software

Additional categories: DVD movies Number of products offered: 15,000

Areas of development: Personalization features, product recommendations, and editorial content are planned.

REVIEWS

products by type, function, or price.

beyond.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Beyond.com presents a cornucopia of choices for PC. Mac. and PDA users. In addition to traditional boxed titles, the site sells downloadable software from major publishers. The site also offers a respectable selection of computer hardware, including digital cameras, PDAs, and storage devices.



buycheapsoftware.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

The name says it all: Here you can Buy Cheap Software. This site offers a relatively small selection-about 300 titles-but it does sell popular programs from well-known publishers, including Adobe, Corel, Lotus, and Microsoft.

buyonet.com

- site available in six languages
- · software available in 20 languages · smooth navigation · easy ordering
- good return policy

Buyonet specializes in downloadable commercial software. Hundreds of business applications, utilities, and games are available for download. For a nominal fee, shoppers can order a CD backup of purchased software.



chumbo.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 194. ____

cws.internet.com

free e-mail summary of software updates . smooth navigation

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate onestop download site for the latest and greatest in Internet software. Find and download Web development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews.

dealdealdeal.com

smooth navigation

Dealdealdeal offers office suites, utility software, graphics programs, operating systems, games, and edutainment software. Although the selection isn't massive, shoppers will find a nice mix of new software and older titles-handy, whether you're looking for Microsoft Office 2000 or Office 97.



download.com

smooth navigation

When you're looking for shareware or free software, Download.com is a fine starting point. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews will help you find the perfect programs. The site links to tens of thousands of files of PC. Mac, Linux, Windows CE, and Palm software.

ebworld.com

can search for age-appropriate games . lists release dates for new game titles . smooth navigation . easy ordering . good return policy

Electronics Boutique is a gamer's paradise. Here you'll find game software and add-ons for your PC and your Mac, as well as titles for Dreamcast, Nintendo 64, and other game consoles.

Check out the new releases, bestsellers, and gaming news.

freewarefiles.com

smooth navigation

Windows users who want great software without having to spend any money can start at Freeware Files. This Web site offers links to gratis business applications, screen savers, games, and many other types of software. It features quick links to the most popular giveaways.

jumbo.com

smooth navigation

Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive. In addition to programs for sale, you'll find thousands of commercial-application demos, along with loads of shareware and free software.

mightyscholar.com

smooth navigation . good return policy

It can be hard to find educational software that's right for your children's ages and learning needs. Mighty Scholar sells handpicked educational software, categorized by age range and subject.

999central.com

buy seven programs, get one free • smooth navigation • good return policy

The 999central.com site offers 500 programs, each for \$9.99. Shoppers can find a wide variety of software here, although educational, entertainment, and lifestyle programs are the most common.

www.pdfstore.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The PDF Store specializes in software for creating and working with Portable Document Format files. The site sells shareware and commercial software for immediate download. The selection includes PDF conversion, management, printing, and development software—a convenient, focused selection.

soft4u.com

- free shipping on orders over \$300
- · smooth navigation · easy ordering
- · good return policy

Soft4U specializes in software for businesses, resellers, schools, and government offices. The company offers same-day shipping on most software. Special prices are available for staff and students at academic institutions.



www.softwarebuyline.com

free shipping on orders of more than \$50 • smooth navigation

good return policy

Software BuyLine has a massive selection of software titles for Windows. Mac OS, and Linux. The site sells Windows CE and Palm applications, too. Prices here are usually among the best. You'll also get easy access to product rebate information.



tucows.com

mirror sites speed downloads

· smooth navigation

Bovine bliss: Tucows is an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. The category list and reviews make it easy to find the software you're seeking. In the Online Store, you can pay for, register,

and download commercial software

ONLINE AUCTIONS

auctions.cnet.com

well-defined categories make items easy to locate . smooth navigation

At CNET Auctions, a site dedicated to computer-product auctions, you can bid on the hardware and software listed or put any computer items you'd like to sell on the block. Sellers range from individuals to well-known companies.

auctions.com

smooth navigation

Auctions.com hosts user-to-user auctions in categories from stamps to pet supplies. The computer auction listings offer a respectable quantity of PC hardware and software.



auctions.goto.com

trend-watch and message boards smooth navigation

GoTo Auctions puts at your disposal a cross-auction search engine that hunts for items in 14 categories.

auctions.yahoo.com

no charge to buy or sell . smooth navigation

Yahoo's user-to-user auction site offers hundreds of thousands of items in diverse categories ranging from computer hardware to motorcycles. Collector clubs, message boards, and live chat let sellers and buyers talk, ask questions, and trade items.

auctions.zdnet.com

the Auction Agent will notify you when a new auction meets your criteria smooth navigation

The auction site of ZDNet, Computer Shopper's parent company, offers primarily computer hardware and software. Categories include consumer electronics, gaming, domains, and services. You'll find user-to-user auctions, as well as new and used items offered by wellknown businesses.

bid.com

The Bid.com business-to-user equipment auction site offers desktop and notebook computers, monitors, upgrades, cameras, and home electronics. Equipment may be new or refurbished.

ebay.com



smooth navigation

With half a million new auctions every day, eBay is the Internet's most popular auction arena. The site is packed with unique services: All purchases are insured up to \$200, and Billpoint lets even occasional sellers accept creditcard and electronic-check payments.

ewanted.com

unique process • smooth navigation

"Turning auctions upside down" is the goal of eWanted. The site allows potential buyers to list the items they're looking for. Sellers can submit offers, bidding down the price to earn the business. Categories include computer equipment, antiques, baby items, and real estate.

haggle.com



smooth navigation

Haggle.com is a user-to-user auction site that has nearly 40 computerrelated categories, plus "other stuff" auctions ranging from musical instruments to automobiles. Sellers will appreciate the free basic listings.

itrack.com



auction news area

Simple to use, iTrack.com searches online auctions so you don't have to. Free memberships allow you to select five patterns (combinations of an auction site and an item) at a given time; for \$25 per year, you can search 10 patterns at a time; and for \$50, 20 patterns at a time. You can choose from 14 auction sites.

tradeout.com



smooth navigation

TradeOut.com describes itself as a "business-to-business exchange for excess inventory and idle assets." It helps companies buy and sell surplus goods-from computers to car parts to construction supplies. Most items are sold at auction, but others are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

ubid.com

smooth navigation

UBid's business-to-user auction house offers computers, electronics, housewares, sports items, jewelry, and gifts. If you can't wait several days to learn if you've won, click on the Auctions Closing This Hour link.

SMALL-BUSINESS **RESOURCES**

atyouroffice.com

free delivery on all orders of more than \$25 • smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

The impressive AtYourOffice.com site offers everything for the office, from the essential to the mundane-30,000 products in all. You can limit searches to products that are generic brands, eco-friendly, or manufactured by women- or minority-owned businesses.

businessplans.org

links to franchise information, public-relations resources, market analysis, and other sites

The Center for Business Planning offers a library of real business plans that you can download and review offline, an automated tool that can evaluate your marketing strategy, and a massive collection of links of interest to anyone starting a business.

consultlink.com

consultant reference checks available . smooth navigation

ConsultLink is a directory service that helps businesses find contractors and

independent consultants in a wide variety of high-tech fields, such as technology strategy, programming, and technical writing. ConsultLink charges a fee to access each profile. A flat-fee option allows unlimited profile views.

directdeposit.com

Since 1991, National Payment Corp. has been providing direct-deposit services for small and medium-size businesses. Using a secure Web browser, you can submit payroll for direct deposit to your employees' bank accounts. The site can exchange data with more than two dozen accounting programs.

efax.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The eFax.com site gives you a personal fax and voice-mail number and delivers incoming messages by e-mail. The free basic service lets you receive an unlimited number of faxes. For a monthly fee, eFax Plus lets you send faxes and convert incoming faxes to text.



e-stamp.com

you don't have to be online to print postage

buying postage requires special hardware

E-Stamp lets you buy postage over the Internet, then print that postage on your printer. You can use E-Stamp to send first-class, Priority Mail, Express Mail, and parcel-post items. The site sells envelopes, labels, postage scales, and other mailing supplies.

www.fedworld.gov/ taxsear.htm

smooth navigation • order federal tax information on CD-ROM

At FedWorld you'll find downloadable tax forms for tax years 1992 through 1999 and instructions on filling them

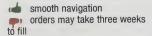
out, as well as IRS publications, tax tables, and tax regulations.

iprint.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

With the help of iPrint.com, creating personalized items for business is a snap. Place your mark on stationery, rubber stamps, business cards, and sticky notepads, or create your own promotional items like key chains, T-shirts, and golf balls.

officebase.com



From office machines to snacks, this office-supply store sells just about anything you could need in the workplace. Office Base is simple but effective, making it easy to find products.

onlinepayroll.com

Online Business Services will help any business become more efficient

and receive more than 80 financial reports. Online Payroll can receive payroll information by telephone, fax, modem, or direct link with your electronic time clock.

paycheckcity.com

Paycheck City provides Web-based calculators to verify the accuracy of payroll checks. Employers can use the site to complete W-4 forms, and employees can verify what they should be paying in federal, state, and Social Security taxes. New tools include an hourly calculator, a bonus calculator, and a stock-option calculator.

www.pointofsale.com

Pointofsale.com specializes in retail essentials: point-of-sale software and hardware, bar-code scanners, magnetic-stripe readers, and receipt printers. FAQs answer questions about bar codes, POS systems, and cash drawers.

smartship.com

helps find your nearest package drop-off site

hifi.com

ifi.com has home-audio and home-theater products to please budget shoppers and discriminating audiophiles alike. The site also sells televisions, portable audio devices, DVD players, and movies. A series of unique features and policies

set it apart from competing online consumer-electronics stores.

If the product you buy from Hifi.com is offered at a lower price at another major dealer within 30 days of your purchase, Hifi.com will auto-



matically refund the difference. In addition, the site's bonus program lets you "trade in" your older home-theater equipment for new items: Auction off used equipment on eBay, and you'll receive a \$50 credit to your Hifi.com account.

Optional extended warranties are offered on products, but with an unusual twist: If you buy an

extended warranty and never use it, the company refunds 50 percent of what you paid for the warranty in the form of a store credit.

The Installation Support section of the site delivers detailed advice on installing components, placing speakers, and troubleshooting your new home-entertainment system. In addition, Hifi.com offers free shipping and a no-questions-asked 45-day return policy on most products. The company will even pay for return shipping.

HIFI.COM

Main focus: Home theater, home audio, portable electronics Additional categories: Phones, multimedia, auctions

Number of products offered: 800

Areas of development: Recently launched sites HerHifi.com for women, and CustomHifi.com, a B2B site for the custom-installation market



limited information about smaller carriers

SmartShip makes it easy to select the right carrier for your shipments. Enter the weight and other details about your package, and the site will help you choose the best major carrier, whether your priority is speed or cost.

www.ssa.gov

smooth navigation

The Social Security Administration's site can make the necessary task of paying Social Security understandable to small-business owners. The Guide for Employers offers detailed help with employer wage-filing responsibilities. The FAQ answers questions about documentation and filing deadlines.

stamps.com

no special hardware required must be online to print postage

Stamps.com lets customers buy postage online and print it using an inkiet or laser printer. You can send items first-class, Priority, and Express Mail. Delivery confirmation and certified mail are also available.

usa.net

USA.net can set up a Web post office for your business, letting you and your employees have instant access to e-mail from any Web browser. The long list of standard and premium features includes necessities such as spellchecking and language translation.

www.virtualpayroll.com

Virtual Payroll simplifies the cycle of payroll and taxes for small businesses. Through this secure site, company and employee information is entered to set up initial payroll accounts; with periodic updates, employees are paid by direct deposit within 48 hours.

webex.com

offers Web-based business collaboration

prequires a special plug-in

WebEx is an online collaboration system that hosts thousands of daily meetings. Share documents and applications with colleagues who have your meeting-room password and the WebEx plug-in. Free "virtual offices" offer personalized conference rooms with online calendar, address-book, documentstorage, and directory tools.

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

bestbuy.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Freshly restocked after a massive overhaul, Best Buy's site offers a fine selection of home audio and video components, portable audio gadgets, digital and traditional cameras, camcorders, and accessories.

consumer-direct.com

smooth navigation

Shopping for something simple, such as a surge protector? Or complicated, like a C-Band satellite receiver? Either way, **Consumer Direct Warehouse** provides a selection of brands to explore.



crutchfield.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

In business for 26 years, Crutchfield assembles an impressive catalog of audio and video products for your home and car. Inexpensive two-day shipping is standard for most orders. The extensive Info Center offers glossaries, guides to choosing components, and installation tips.

800.com

review your complete order history • smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

The 800.com site specializes in video and audio systems, personal

electronics, video games, and movies. See side-by-side comparisons of products. The selection includes digital cameras, televisions, and home and car stereos.

etown.com

smooth navigation shipping costs and return policies can vary among etown.com partners

Consumer electronics is the focus at etown.com, a site offering gadgets such as cordless phones and flatscreen televisions. The site also serves up consumer-electronics news, informative features, and a knowledge bank that explains how to buy, use, and troubleshoot equipment.

gadgetuniverse.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You'll discover gadgets galore at Gadget Universe from useful ones (clocks, stereos, and phones) to fun toy gizmos. The selection includes items for your car, home, and office.

giantsavings.com

smooth navigation

GiantSavings.com offers a wide selection of home electronics, ranging from DVD players to PDAs.

globe-mart.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Global Mart's electronics area offers audio/video components, flat-panel displays, digital cameras, and multifunction printers. The selection also includes handheld PCs and uninterruptible power supplies.

hifi.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 197.

igo.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

The iGo site sells electronic necessities for folks on the go, including PDAs, cellular phones, and carrying cases. The extensive catalog of add-ons includes antennae, batteries, and other accessories for users of mobile digital devices.

va.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

ValueAmerica offers an array of homeentertainment products, including audio and video equipment, cameras, and communications products. Plus, you'll find movies, games, and other media. Extended service plans are available, and online shoppers enjoy free shipping.

theweb-shop.com

easy ordering

Shop The Web Shop Superstore for a wide variety of home-electronics offerings, including computers, home-office equipment, cameras, camcorders, and home and car audio.

CAMERAS

abbeycamera.com

links to manufacturer sites smooth navigation • good return policy

Abbey Camera's catalog of more than 10,000 cameras and accessory items will impress even veteran photographers. The options range from 35mm cameras to medium- and large-format models, darkroom supplies, and professional gear.

keh.com

message board offers technical advice • smooth navigation • good return policy

In business for 20 years, KEH Camera Brokers peddles new items as well as good-condition used equipment. The automated buying service gives an immediate quote on what KEH will pay for your used equipment.

www.normancamera.com



good return policy

From point-and-shoot models to hightech digital cameras, you're likely to find it in Norman Camera's catalog. See a large selection of film scanners, video cameras. and accessories



photoalley.com

tips and how-to articles • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

From Agfa to Yashica, if it has a lens. it's at Photo Alley. This site features a catalog of more than 11,000 products, ranging from cameras and gadget bags to camcorders and even binoculars.

ritzcamera.com

free shipping on orders of more than \$50 • smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy

In addition to offering cameras and accessories, Ritz Camera also sells photo albums and frames. Shoppers with a retail location nearby can see their photos online in one hour, then order reprints or merchandise with a photo on it.

servicemerchandise.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

many items only available for in-store pickup

In business for nearly 40 years, Service Merchandise is a catalog showroom offering jewelry, home accessories, and travel items. The Cameras area of its Web site sells 35mm, digital, and Advanced Photo System (APS) cameras, as well as binoculars and telescopes.

Choos and Buyi

 You can find a wide variety of digital cameras for every budget and type of user, from \$40 toys to \$4,000 professional models. Make sure you buy at the right level for your needs. Most consumer-level cameras cost \$300 to \$700.

 You'll need a camera that can interface with your computer. Some cameras transfer images to your computer over a serial, USB, SCSI, or infrared connection. Other cameras save images on removable media (such as floppy disks, SmartMedia cards, or SuperDisks) that can be read directly on a PC.

 You can find reviews of digital cameras, sample photos, and answers to your questions at PCPhotoReview.com, DigitalCameras.com, the Digital Camera Resource Page (www.dcresource.com), and of course, at our own site, computershopper.com. Our parent company ZDNet also has a Digital Camera Supercenter (http://cgi.zdnet.com/slink?47910) for finding and buying a camera, and printing photos.

 Once you've made a choice, use price-comparison sites such as DealTime.com or NexTag.com to find the best prices on cameras, media, and accessories. Understand the seller's return policy: Depending on the seller, you may be able to

return the camera if you don't like it. If you don't need the latest and greatest model, visit online auction sites, where you'll find older models and refurbished units. Try uBid (www.ubid.com), eBay (www.ebay.com), and ZDNet

Online photo-finishers

Auctions (auctions.zdnet.com). Shutterfly.com, Snapfish.com, and Ofoto (www.ofoto.com), can make prints from your digital pictures.

Digital Camera Resource Page

 If your pictures will be viewed solely online, a camera with 1-megapixel or lower resolution is fine. If you'll be making prints from your digital pictures, a 2- or 3-megapixel camera will produce higher-quality prints. The chart at www.digitalcameras.com/printers_resolution.asp shows the resolution necessary to make prints at 4x6, 8x10, and other common sizes.

BOOKS AND MUSIC

www.alibris.com

- Book Hound tool will search for a book for a month and e-mail you
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Alibris offers one-stop searching and browsing of hundreds of independent booksellers around the globe. You don't have to be a book collector to appreciate the massive selection in categories from romance to computers.



amazon.com

buy and sell rare and unusual items in person-to-person auctions · discussion boards and member Web pages . smooth navigation . easy ordering • good return policy

Amazon.com's catalog of books, CDs, and videos is nothing short of gargantuan. Speedy searches and insightful recommendations make it easy to find what you're looking for, even if you don't know for sure what that is.

audible.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Audible delivers the next generation of books on tape. Buy and download audio programs, such as The Wall Street Journal or best-selling books. Then listen to the programs on your PC or a portable player.

bn.com

- music, DVDs, videos, posters, software, and magazines available · smooth navigation · easy ordering
- good return policy

With millions of titles in its catalog, Barnes & Noble's site is a book lover's dream. If the book you want is out of print, don't despair: Barnes & Noble has associations with used-book sellers across the country.

bookfinder.com

mailing list for booksellers

BookFinder is a search engine that scans the databases of 15,000 booksellers to find new, used, rare, and outof-print books. It's a quick way to search many independent bookstores at once for hard-to-find titles.

borders.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering . good return policy . best-sellers and forthcoming books sold for 50 percent off list price

If you've ever gotten lost in one of Borders' enormous retail stores, you'll appreciate this vast site. It offers a selection of 10 million books, CDs, and videos. Check out the In the News listings to find today's topical books.

cdnow.com

create custom CDs . site available in seven languages • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good

CDnow is a megasite offering an extensive catalog of titles on vinyl, cassette, and CD. RealAudio sound clips and reviews are available for many of the discs. The Album Advisor learns your musical tastes and suggests other bands you'll enjoy.

cdworld.com

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CDworld sells software, video games, movies, and music-more than half a million items in all. You can get movies on videotape, DVD, laserdisc, or movie CD. Video-game choices include Dreamcast, Nintendo, and PlayStation, as well as PC and Mac titles.

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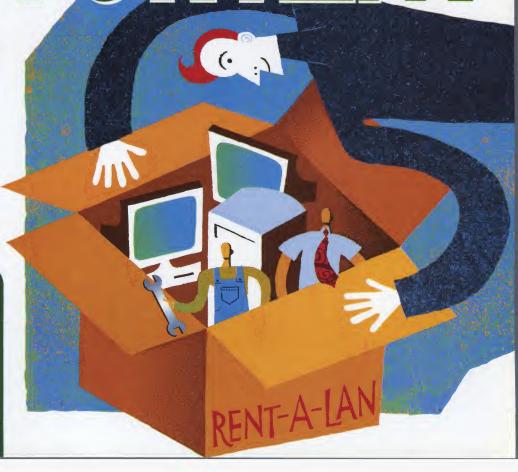
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BY LYNN GINSBURG

Unified messaging services let you retrieve e-mail, voice messages, and faxes from a single location.

T'S GETTING TOUGHER AND TOUGHER TO KEEP UP WITH THE BLIZZARD of e-mail, voice mail, and faxes you receive each day. Take a few days off, and it's nearly impossible. Unified messaging won't lighten the load, but it does simplify things by putting all your messages in one place. These free services integrate your e-mail, voice

mail, and faxes into one Web-based inbox. You are assigned a single phone number where all callers leave messages. With some services, the number is local; with others, it's toll-free.

Most of these services offer free basic plans in the hope of upgrading you to fee-based premium services. The two sites we examined, Onebox.com and uReach.com, offer plenty of functionality for free, plus reasonably priced premium services.

ONEBOX.COM

Onebox.com offers a local number with a four-digit extension in 44 area codes in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, D.C. Onebox, in partnership with ZDNet, Computer Shopper's parent company, is expanding to other parts of the United States, as well as internationally.

The Web site's clean interface reveals at a glance the new e-mail, voice mail, and faxes you've received. An icon indicates the message type. Voice messages, which you can listen to using either a QuickTime or WAV player, include a caller's phone number and the date and time they were received. You can view faxes in GIF or TIFF formats, or with a downloadable viewer. You can't send faxes via Onebox, but the company plans to add this capability as a pre-



Reach	Private Room Shared Roo			m / Public Room
	Messages - "Inbox" (*unread: 6 total: 10)			
Address Book	Checked (tem(s)) File it Delete			
Calendar		Type	Sender Amanagement	Subject
Message Center	Г		Lynn Ginsburg	• IEST
Filing Cabinet	Г	9	565-565-9505	•1 sec voice message, receive
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Onebox uses different colors to differentiate various types of messages; uReach uses different icon styles.

mium service. You can also configure Onebox to retrieve e-mail from your POP accounts.

If you can't get to a computer, you can retrieve voice and e-mail messages by phone. The service recites e-mail messages using text-to-speech technology. It sounds strange

and mechanical, but it works. You can even access messages using a wireless phone.

A basic calendar and address book is accessible both from the Web site and by phone, so you can maintain appointments and phone lists from the road.

Onebox places no limit on the number of messages you can receive, and the 3MB storage limit (about 50 minutes of voicemail messages) shouldn't pose a problem as long as you keep deleting older messages. The \$4.95-per-month premium service provides a seven-digit number with no extension, 25MB of storage (about 400 minutes of voice-mail messages), and your own customized greeting in place of the standard Onebox greeting.

UREACH.COM

The services uReach.com offers are comparable to those of Onebox. You get an integrated in-box from which to access voice mail, e-mail, and faxes; the ability to listen to voice mail and e-mail by phone; and a calendar and address book accessible via the Web or phone. Wireless access is free for now, but the company warns that could change.

Unlike Onebox, uReach offers callers a toll-free number plus extension. After 30 minutes per month, though, the company charges up to 10 cents per minute. (The actual per-minute charge is based on the amount of additional time you use.)

The premium service won't cost you anything; you're charged only for the time in excess of 30 minutes per month. You'll have to provide a credit-card number to receive the premium service, however. The company says this is for identification purposes and to deter users from signing up for multiple numbers. The premium service gives you a toll-free number with no extension and the ability to forward your uReach calls to another phone. This means callers can reach you at your home or office using your toll-free uReach number.

UReach lets you send faxes (unlike Onebox), though the procedure is rather roundabout. You must send the fax by e-mail to the uReach fax server, which then sends the fax on to its destination anywhere in the United States.

It's your call whether you use these services to unify your messages or just create new receiving outlets. But even with their limitations, these no-cost services are among the best freebies the Web has to offer. V



Great esi

BY DONNA TAPELLINI

s your Web site driving customers away? Do they have to scroll through page after page before they can make a purchase, cool their heels while large image files load, or answer too many questions at checkout? If the answer is yes, your problem is bad design. Many e-commerce sites rush to open their cyberdoors without giving a thought to the shopping experience. The result could send surfers to your competition, never to return.

To help you fix design flaws that detract from the buying experience, we queried designers at top site-building shops. Here are eight of their most valuable tips.

USE TRICKLE-DOWN NAVIGATION. Give visitors an overview of what you're selling, then let them progressively click down to the details of a product. Keep as much information visible as possible without cluttering the screen.

"We try to create understandable, digestible, global navigation structures that trickle down to the local level," says Spencer Spinnell, executive vice president and creative director for Koko Interactive (www.kokonet.

These 8 tips from design pros help you build a site that fosters buying.

com) in New York. At 2glow.com, a site Koko Interactive designed, visitors can view top-10 lists of beauty and personal-care products. From the first page, they can choose among four product categories: Body, Face, Hair, or Room. A drop-down menu under Body, for instance, lists items such as soaps and lotions. Choose soaps, and 10 grayed-out photos pop up. As you pass your mouse over each it lights up, and you can see a description of the soap, along with star ratings. At this point, you can click to learn about ingredients or make a purchase.

SWEEP NAVIGATION UNDER THE CARPET.

Often, navigation is too conspicuous on a Web site. "You want to see the prod-

ucts, not the navigation," says Michael Felber of New York-based Oven Digital (www.ovendigital.com), designer of the e-commerce site for upscale jeweler Tiffany & Co. "It shouldn't take up half the screen." In fact, Felber says, navigational elements should be hidden from the user's view.

MAKE YOUR PRODUCTS LOOK GOOD, BUT DO IT QUICKLY.

This is one of the most challenging conundrums for the e-commerce designer. Web surfers are an antsy bunch, so your site needs to appeal to those with short attention spans. Web surfers are looking for satisfaction very quickly. Unless membership is required for shopping, it should not take more than four to six clicks (not counting drilling down for details) from the front page to checkout.

At the same time, you need to give shoppers a good look at your product. Shopping your site shouldn't feel like flipping through an Excel spreadsheet, says Spinnell. To make 2glow.com look and feel as much like a brick-and-mortar store as possible, Koko Interactive's designers opted

for Macromedia Flash and Generator over HTML to produce robust product shots that load quickly.

If you're exhibiting a lot of highquality product photos, keep other graphics on the light side. "Use tables, HTML graphs, and color," Spinnell advises.

KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Like a good print design, a Web site needs white space. Spinnell advises against adding too much saturated color to a page.

To keep your site straightforward, effective naming and structure are also essential. According to Oven Digital's Felber, "The hierarchical tree must be structured in an intuitive way." Whenever your surfers click on a link, they should get what they're expecting. Don't get



Effective use of white space at OvenDigital-designed MoMA gives the museum's online store a clean, uncluttered look.

too creative when naming a link or a page. On Tiffany's site, for instance, the jewelry may be elegant, but the language is plain. Click on Shop, then Rings, and that's exactly what you'll get.

Although the Web offers a multitude of options for interactivity, don't overdo it. "You can do so many things on the Web



Mouse-overs at 2glow's site give users easy access to details and ratings for products that interest them.



Quick and easy drill-downs at Tiffany & Co.'s site get shoppers from product details to the purchase page in just a few clicks.

that e-commerce sites fall into the trap of offering too many options," Felber says. "Like a Swiss Army knife, everything is there. The problem is, none of it works.

> You've got to balance the number of options with ease of use."

DON'T SKIMP ON THE INFORMATION.

Though it's important to keep things simple, you don't want to turn surfers away because they

couldn't find the answers to their questions. Anticipate their every question to make sure you answer them clearly and specifically. Before you even start to think about the look and feel of a site, gather every piece of information about the company that could

be important to shoppers.

Fort Point Partners (www.ftpoint. com) in San Francisco, designers of Kmart's BlueLight.com, advocates a similar strategy. "Spend the major financial resources to make sure your site rocks right away, rather than conducting countless relaunches that waste

> time and money and turn off customers," advises Kevin Smith, vice president of business development. Then spend smaller sums on taking risks to attract buyers.

FOR BEST COLOR ACCURACY, TEST AND TEST AGAIN.

If you're selling a product where color matters, such as apparel, color fidelity is a crucial to minimizing product returns. However, coloraccuracy tools are marginal at best, Spinnell and Felber concur. "You'll need to do lots of cross-browser and cross-system testing," says Spinnell. For example, there's a tremendous

color shift from the Mac to the PC. To be safe, he advises sticking with the 256-color palette and viewing your site on a variety of browsers and computers.

PROTECT YOUR BRAND IDENTITY. On the Web, your company's brand is more than just logo and color; your Web site is your brand identity. The page layout, HTML links, amount of text on the screen, and number of steps in the checkout process all contribute to your identity. Plan carefully to ensure you communicate your core values to the customer.

STICK TO THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR.

This may sound like a negative, but it's what makes a Web site work for the largest possible number of users-and if you're trying to make a sale, that should be your goal. Assume most people are connecting at 28.8Kbps, with 800x600 resolution. That way, you're better able to craft imagery and decide how much is HTML (text, color, and tables) and how much is image-driven.

Try to build sites that work regardless of the user's configuration. Writing percentagebased tables in HTML, for instance, allows



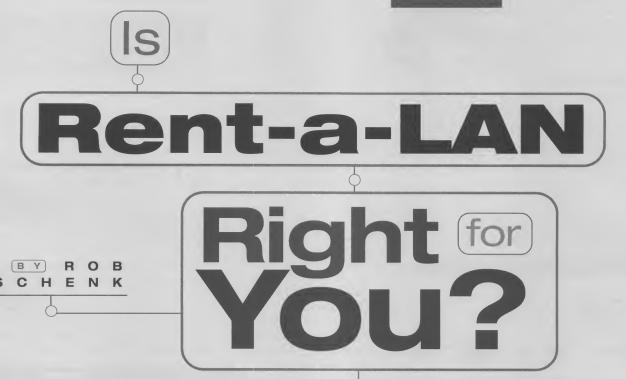
FortPoint-designed HearMusic gives shoppers a good look atand a good listen to—the CDs it sells.

the browser frame to scale up, so the tables look good at any resolution.

Creating a site that's attractive and easy to navigate requires compromise. You must find a way to leave in what's essential and throw out the rest. "You try to build a site as small as possible," Felber says, "but sometimes even that is too big." Once you're ready to put up your site, edit it down by 75 percent, advises Fort Point Partners' Smith. Remember, this is not a catalog or the Yellow Pages; it's e-selling.

Often, the best way to evaluate your site is to be a shopper. Pretend you're a customer and try to buy something at your own site. If you leave in frustration, these tips should help you fix the problem.

NETWORKABLE



Subscription-based computing services let you outsource acquisition, maintenance, and support.

a perfect world, computers would never crash, hardware and software would be maintenance-free, and users would never complain. In the real world, they do, they aren't, and they will.

Computer maintenance is a costly affair, with the average business spending between \$4,500 and \$7,500 per year per PC, according to the Gartner Group. And if your business matches the profile of the average Gartner Group respondent (fewer than 46 employees), you don't even have a full-time IT staffer. Instead, you use either a resident guru who dons an IT cap when necessary, or an outside consultant on an as-needed basis. Either approach has flaws. In the first scenario, mounting computer problems can keep your resident guru from accomplishing regular work. In the second, affected employees may twiddle their thumbs while waiting for the consultant.

Borrowing from approaches used at large enterprises, several companies have begun offering subscription-based computing services to small businesses. For a monthly fee,

these companies offer a vast array of services, including network installation, maintenance, monitoring, Web-based e-mail, vertical applications, Web-site hosting, nightly backups, automatic software updates, secure remote access, firewall and antivirus protection, high-speed Internet and intranet connectivity, remote-control PC troubleshooting, and phone support. They even offer replacement PCs configured with your specific settings in the event of a hardware problem.

The subscription model offers advantages over traditional methods of acquisition, maintenance, and support. Because there's no large capital investment, you can afford services otherwise out of reach. The predictable monthly fee per PC helps you project costs. And without the headaches and costs associated with network maintenance, you can devote your attention to your company's primary mission.

MANAGING THE RISKS

The subscription model is compelling, but it's not for everyone. For starters, your

data resides on someone else's server. Although the chances are remote, your mission-critical data could be compromised. To prevent such occurrences, outsourcers employ powerful data encryption and allow access only to a few high-level staff members. But if your data is highly sensitive, this small risk may still be too high. You must also feel comfortable signing a long-term contract, often for as long as three years.

If your business relies on homegrown applications or maintains a cross-platform network (combining Windows, Macs, Novell, or Linux), you may find the subscription model lacks the flexibility to accommodate your particular needs. Some specialized applications may not work well under Windows 2000, for instance, so you may have to update custom software to enable the outsourcer to support the application reliably. Likewise, vendors generally provide only basic network-connectivity support for the Macintosh platform, and Linux generally isn't supported at all.

Outsourcers have created complex network infrastructures capable of managing large numbers of networks—but this does not always translate into adequate maintenance and support at your site. Outsourcers face the challenge of proving to clients that they can accurately and promptly diagnose problems, scale to demand, and optimize network performance. Be sure to hold them accountable for agreed-upon service levels, and insist on clear and useful reports on a regular basis.

companies—CenterBeam, Everdream Corp., and micronpc.com.

CENTERBEAM

Santa Clara, Calif.-based CenterBeam gears its service to small businesses in the 10- to 500-seat range. At press time, service was available in 10 cities nationwide and should be available in another 10 by the time you read this. CenterBeam targets companies in metropolitan centers with

(Lucent Orinoco, at 11Mbps), eliminating the significant expense of cabling installation. And without the cable tethers, employees can more easily move their PCs and laptops around the office. (They can also move around the country, while retaining access to the corporate LAN.) But wireless technology does pose security risks. To address these, the company enables encryption by default. The tradeoff is lower overall network speed.

CenterBeam's 24-hour-daily phone support can also be reached with a click-to-

talk button on every desktop. Technicians can address problems by taking remote control of a user's PC (with permission). If necessary, CenterBeam can deploy a "hot spare," complete with user data, within an hour.

Dell and Microsoft Corp. are significant investors in

CenterBeam, and these companies aid with support and manageability. Desktops come with Windows 2000 preinstalled. Those who want to retain some desktops that aren't running Windows 2000 can run their network in mixed mode.

CenterBeam offers a range of Microsoft applications, including the full Microsoft Office suite

and Exchange e-mail. Customers can also access application service providers (ASPs) for an additional monthly fee through CenterBeam. The vertical-market ASPs cover areas such as customer-relationship management, human resources, and sales-force automation. CenterBeam has much stronger ASP options than the other two companies we look at here.

Signing on with CenterBeam is a 36month commitment. With an initial installation and data-migration fee of \$1,500 and an average monthly cost of \$200 per desktop and \$275 per laptop, it's the priciest of the three services. But the monthly fee includes the DSL line and all support services. And

BEFORE YOU SIGN

Before you even make any calls, do some preparatory work. First, take a complete inventory of your servers, desktops, network infrastructure, and applications. Then compile a list of services you require, such as secure remote access, firewall protection, and printing.

Next, think about your company's growth over the next six months to two years, so you can choose the right degree of scalability. Also, determine the level of support you need. Do you need 24-hour-daily support, or is 12 hours per day sufficient? Make sure your service-level agreement (SLA) has a clause stipulating that if performance dips below a certain level, you'll be credited on the next bill.

Consider the security implications of outsourcing your IT structure. Make sure you're comfortable with the outsourcer's security policy. Finally, verify the provider's credentials by checking references. Have your list of questions ready.

When you've narrowed down your choices, prepare a request for quote (RFQ). That's what we did to assess the offerings of three leading subscription-based computing

DSL connectivity.

The service consists of two parts: office infrastructure (LAN, printers, and desktops) and a centralized data center (e-mail, antivirus, and security protection). CenterBeam supplies Dell Computer Corp. PCs as part of the service. Clients communicate with the data center over a secure, high-speed Covad DSL connection. Through this secure link, clients can safely access the Internet and have their data backed up daily.

CenterBeam's Windows 2000-based enterprise backbone offers a high degree of remote manageability and system stability. It's the only vendor to have standardized on wireless LAN technology

unlike Everdream and micronpc.com, which provide only basic connectivity for Macintoshes, CenterBeam provides both network connections and support.

Despite its higher price, CenterBeam's solution is well-crafted, robust, and stable, offering a high level of integration and standardization, plus an impressive range of ASP partnerships.

EVERDREAM CORP.

Everdream currently targets businesses with two to 20 seats—those that normally purchase equipment through local resellers. But the company is in the process of building networking solutions capable of supporting up to 100 seats. Its market currently centers around the Bay area, but it's expanding nationwide. PCs are Everdream-branded Pentium IIIs with 17-inch monitors; laptops are also available.

The company provides all the necessary switches and routers to connect to both the Internet and its data center. Everdream is evaluating wireless solutions, but for now installation costs will include Category 5 network cabling. Because of its switched architecture, Everdream's network performance is higher than CenterBeam's, and you can choose between Windows 98 and 2000.

WHERE TO RENT A LAN

COMPANY CenterBeam Everdream Corp. Santa Clara, CA Fremont, CA 877-437-3264 408-844-0900 www.centerbeam.com www.everdream.com NUMBER OF SEATS SUPPORTED 10 to 500 two to 20

STRENGTHS **ASP** options

Service and support Like CenterBeam and micronpc.com, Everdream offers e-mail, Microsoft Office applications, secure remote access, Web hosting, firewalls, and antivirus protection. You can also rent a range of third-party software for a monthly fee. A single Intuit QuickBooks license, for instance, costs \$17 per month. Upcoming ASP partnerships will provide access to Web-based vertical applications, though not as many as CenterBeam

Support is Everdream's strong suit. Phone and e-mail support is available 24 hours daily, and technicians can access users' systems remotely. After clicking an icon on the desktop, users will receive a callback within 90 seconds. All systems include application tutorials and help files.

Everdream's proprietary "self-healing" technology helps keep PCs up and running. If you accidentally delete a system file, for instance, technicians can run a

script that automatically reinstalls the file. The PCs' 20GB hard drives contain clean sys-

tem images on a hidden partition, so if you mess up your PC, a technician can recreate it from the hidden images. Everdream performs daily backups to its secure data center, and administrators use homegrown applications and scripting to keep PCs running at full capacity.

The service costs \$99 per month per managed PC and \$229 per month for a Toshiba laptop. You'll pay extra for a local server, and data migration will run you \$250 per PC and \$1,050 per server. Your commitment to Everdream is the shortest of the group, however, at 30 months.

Standard service is dial-up. For DSL, you'll pay an extra monthly fee, unless you sign up more than 10 PCs. Everdream can also bond several phone lines together to increase Internet bandwidth. If you need that much bandwidth, however, we suggest you select DSL or cable instead.

Everdream is a good choice for small businesses requiring high levels of support and reliability.

MICRONPC.COM

The first major PC maker to enter the subscription-service arena, micronpc.com offers services to businesses with up to

micronpc.com

800-438-3343

micronpc.com

Meridian, ID

Up to 2,500

2,500 seats. A single monthly includes PCs, lap-

tops, servers, network-infrastructure equipment, and LAN-integration work.

Web-hosting services

On the support side, the service is less comprehensive than the other offerings. The company doesn't currently offer remotemanagement capabilities, though it may in the future. Users must rely on phone support or pay-per-visit troubleshooting sessions. Micronpc.com will install and configure backup solutions, but you'll need to switch backup tapes yourself. In contrast, CenterBeam and Everdream perform the backup and restore procedures for you. Though micronpc.com will connect Macs to your network, you're on your own for ongoing support.

The service assists with data migration, LAN-integration work, and server setup and installation. Phone support for desktops and laptops is available 24 hours a day, but if the problem lies with your server, you're limited to three free resolutions per year.

NETWORKABLE

Micronpc.com's subscription computing service gives you easy access to its

HostPro Web hosting services. For an additional \$50 per month, HostPro's Netpro package includes 200MB of hard drive space, 20 e-mail accounts, 10 RealAudio/ RealVideo streams, and 20,000MB of traffic per month. E-commerce features include a shopping cart with SSL, and support for Authorize.Net and CyberCash. The service supports Access, FoxPro, and Cold Fusion databases.

Another micronpc.com service, Mservices, includes onsite server support, system upgrades, peripheral installation, and network operating-system resolutions. You can pay per incident or purchase a package. Alternatively, for Web-based hardware diagnostics, software updates, and self-healing technologies, go to connected support.com.

Micronpc.com's IT package requires a 36-month commitment and costs about \$90 per month per PC for all network infrastructure equipment, a local server, e-mail, Internet connectivity, and remoteaccess capabilities. HostPro's Netpro service costs an additional \$50 per month, but you have the convenience of having both services on one bill. Data migration costs \$79 per desktop, while server migrations are custom-quoted. DSL also carries an additional monthly fee, depending on the speed you select.

Although micronpc.com is cheaper than the other services, its lack of remotemanageability options is a drawback; manageability can significantly improve a small business's efficiency. The Web-hosting addition offers significant value, though its LANmanageability services are a step behind those of CenterBeam and Everdream.

IS IT FOR YOU?

The subscription-service model makes good sense if you decide a monthly fee is appropriate for the complexity of your network. However, many small businesses haven't itemized the true costs associated with maintaining a network and are unable to cost-justify a subscription-based service. In most cases, such maintenance costs are higher than you imagine.

We believe the subscription-service model is a good fit for homogeneous PC networks running common office-productivity applications. Companies with more complex needs, such as mixed networks, may prefer to wait until subscription services have more fully integrated additional hardware and software platforms. \(\nbeggriagrage\)

already offers.

BY LOU GRINZO

Picking the right version just takes planning.

OR COMPANIES WITH ACCESS TO STRONG PROGRAMMING RESOURCES, adding the Linux OS as a complement to (not a replacement for) Windows can provide access to specialized applications. Linux is especially popular among those who maintain Web servers, but which Linux version is the best for your situation?

For those taking a closer look at Linux, an essential first decision is picking the "distribution." Unlike Windows, which has only a few versions in production, all from the same vendor, Linux offers many different ones, called distributions (or "distros," in Linux-speak). These are available from a long list of companies and individuals, priced from nothing to hundreds of dollars. Even restricting yourself to those that run on Intel x86 hardware leaves literally dozens of options.

AND THEN THERE WERE THREE

It's useful to group the distros into three categories: commercial, noncommercial, and "loopback." The commercial products install either in place of or alongside the operating system currently on your system, and include some very complete packages, particularly the "big five": Caldera OpenLinux, Corel Linux, Red Hat Linux, SuSE Linux, and TurboLinux. The commercial distros can be overwhelming because of the many applications and utilities they include; SuSE 6.4, for example, is on six CDs.

The noncommercial distros, such as Slackware and Debian, tend to be more popular with longtime Linux users, because they make it easiest for knowledgeable users to retain complete control over the entire system. But these packages provide the least in terms of handholding during installation and administration, so there's a clear trade-off. Note that most distros require either their own hard drive, or the repartitioning of your drive to make room for Linux alongside the current oper-

The loopback distros are an exception, since they don't require hard drive partition-

ing. Instead, the entire distribution, including applications, utilities, and graphical interface, is stored in about a dozen files and is simply copied to a directory onto the hard drive containing your Windows system. One of those files is several hundred megabytes and contains the entire file system for Linux. When you want to switch from Windows to Linux, you shut down to DOS mode, switch to the Linux directory, and then run a DOS BAT file. Once inside Linux, you can use what's encapsulated in that huge file, as well as all the files on your Windows configuration. Loopback distros,

such as Phat Linux (www.phatlinux.com), are a terrific way to test-drive Linux without disturbing your Windows configuration.

YOUR SKILLS, THEIR POPULARITY

A critical factor in choosing a Linux distro is your company's level of in-house expertise—with computers in general and with Unix-like operating systems in particular. If you have resident Linux or Unix gurus, you have many more options.

Because no user lives by an OS alone, you must consider applications and support. Not surprisingly, this is where the bigger-name, commercial packages are strongest. In fact, if you read through the listings of downloadable software on sites such as freshmeat.net and SourceForge (www.sourceforge.net), you'll see that many programs are provided as source code (which you must compile into a running program) as well as binary packages prebuilt for Red Hat. These binaries will often run on various distributions, but sticking with the most popular distro is still a wise idea when you're just starting out.

If you're eager to get some hands-on experience with Linux in your business environment but want to stay as isolated as possible from disk partitioning and other technical details, try one of the freely downloadable loopback distros.

On the other hand, if you want the easiest installation available in a nonloopback distro, give either Caldera Open Linux or Corel Linux a try. Both offer completely automated options for repartitioning your disk and installing Linux alongside Windows, or for letting Linux take over the entire disk.

If you can handle a normal distribution process and want to use the widest possible selection of commercial and free software, Red Hat is your best option.

For more information on the distributions, as well as download sites, see Linuxberg (downcity.linuxberg.com/distribution.html) or Linuxiso.org. It's also a good idea to peruse the entire set of Linux how-tos (www.linuxdoc.org/docs.html#howto), particularly those related to hardware compatibility and configuration issues.

As Linux continues to grow in popularity, more and more companies will face the challenge of taking advantage of what it offers. But be sure to select the Linux distro that really matches the needs and resources of your business.

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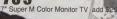
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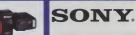
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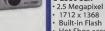
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SCA HARD DRIVES

Speed

7200

10,000

10,000

7200

7200

15,000

10,000

10,000

10,000

10,000

Speed 7200

10,000

10,000

10,000

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Solutions, Solid State Drives,

Processors, Motherboards and More!

7200

7200

Part Number

ST39236LC

ST39204LC

ST318404LC

ST318436LC

ST318451LC

ST336704LC

ST173404LC

Single Connector Attachment

ST336704LCV

ST173404LCV

Part Number XC309100SCA

TY309200SCA

XC318400SCA

TY318400SCA

XC336400SCA

TY336700SCA

ST318436LCV

ST39236LCV

\$229

\$249

\$375

\$299

\$319

\$619

\$669

\$189

\$339

\$329

\$515

\$899

SCA & SCA 160 (Single Connector Attachment)

ULTRA/160M SCSI HARD DRIVES

Quantum.

ULTRA 160 SCSI (up to 160MB/sec) Capacity Speed 7200 Buffer Part Number XC309100LW 4MB

73.4GB	8MB	10,000	TY373400LW	\$1599	\$1729
36.7GB	8MB	10,000	TY336700LW	\$899	\$1029
36.4GB	4MB	7200	XC336400LW	\$649	\$779
18.4GB	8MB	10,000	TY318400LW	\$515	\$645
18.3GB	4MB	7200	XC318400LW	\$329	\$459
9.2GB	8MB	10,000	TY309200LW	\$339	\$479

Seagate

ULTRA 160 SCSI (up to 160MB/sec)

Capacity	Buffer	Speed	Part Number	int.	Ext.
9.2GB	2MB	7200	ST39236LW	\$219	\$349
9.2GB	4MB	7200	ST39236LWV	\$229	\$359
9.2GB	4MB	10,000	ST39204LW	\$249	\$379
18.2GB	4MB	10,000	ST318404LW	\$375	\$505
18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318436LW	\$299	\$429
18.4GB	4MB	7200	ST318436LWV	\$319	\$449
18.4GB	4MB	15,000	ST318451LW	\$565	\$695
36.7GB	4MB	10,000	ST336704LW	\$619	\$749
36.7GB	16MB	10,000	ST336704LWV	\$669	\$799
73.4GB	4MB	10,000	ST173404LW	\$1129	\$1259
73.4GB	16MB	10,000	ST173404LWV	\$1199	\$1329

ULTRA 160 SCSI (160MB/sec)

Gapacity	Railel	Speed	Part Number	INT.	EXT.
9.1GB	4MB	7200	07N3120	\$229	\$359
9.1GB	4MB	10,000	07N3220	\$249	\$379
18.2GB	4MB	7200	07N3110	\$333	\$473
18.3GB	4MB	10,000	07N3210	\$385	\$515
36.4GB	4MB	7200	07N3100	\$575	\$705
36.9GB	4MB	10,000	07N3200	\$619	\$749
We carry	a comple	te line of U	Iltra 160 SCSI C	ontrollers	. Call!

FIBRE 160 HARD DRIVES

Seagate

C	apacity	Speed	Buffer	Part Number	int.
9.	2GB	10,000rpm	4MB	ST39204FC	\$249
18	3.2GB	10,000rpm	4MB	ST318404FC	\$375
36	5.7GB	10,000rpm	4MB	ST336704FC	\$619
73	3.4GB	10,000rpm	4MB	ST173404FC	\$1129

Prolong the life of your hard drive by keeping it COOL!



Mounts in a 5.25" bay. Features dual cooling fans & heat activated circuitry to increase fan speed as the drive gets warmer. A necessity for 7200 & 10.000rpm drives, (VHDFAN)

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Unbeatable Prices on all CD Media!

CD RECORDABLE MEDIA

CDR	-74 in jewel case	Hot New Price!
12x	Budget 5 pack (CDR74B-5)	\$5
12x	Budget 20 pack (CDR74B-20)	\$18
12x	Budget 50 pack (CDR74B-50)	\$42
12x	Budget 100 pack (CDR74B-100)	\$78
12x	5 pack (CDR74-5)	\$6
12x	20 pack (CDR74-20)	\$24

50 pack (CDR74-50) 12x 100 pack (CDR74-100) \$105 Platinum 5 pack (CDR74PA-5) 12x \$6 Platinum 20 pack (CDR74PA-20) \$24 12x Platinum 50 pack (CDR74PA-50) 12x Platinum 100 pack (CDR74PA-100) \$106

Printable CDR-74 in jewel case Alone with CDR Budget 5 pack (CDR74PB-5) 12x \$4 12x Budget 20 pack (CDR74PB-20) 12x Budget 50 pack (CDR74PB-50) \$35 12x Budget 100 pack (CDR74PB-100) \$66 5 pack (CDR74P-5) \$7 20 pack (CDR74P-20) 12x \$26 12x

50 pack (CDR74P-50) 100 pack (CDR74P-100) 12x **NEW 80 MINUTE MEDIA!**

12x	5 Pack [CDR80-5]	\$4
12x	20 Pack [CDR80-20]	\$13
12x	50 Pack [CDR80-50]	\$32
12x	100 Pack [CDR80-100]	\$59
Bulk!	Spindle 74 minute media. Includes 50 CD-Rs (12x),	
	No jewel cases included (CDR74S8-50)	\$42
Bulk!	Spindle 74 minute media. Includes 100 CD-Rs (12x),	
	No jewel cases included (CDR74S8-100)	\$79
Bulk!	Spindle 80 minute media. Includes 100 CD-Rs (12x),	
	No jewel cases included (CDR80S8-100)	\$43

CD REWRITABLE MEDIA

CDR-7	4W in jewel case	Hot New Price!
4x	Budget 5 pack (CDR74WB-5)	\$6
4x	Budget 20 pack (CDR74WB-20)	\$24
4x	Budget 50 pack (CDR74WB-50)	\$56
4x	Budget 100 pack (CDR74WB-100	\$104
4x	5 pack (CDR74W-5)	\$12
4x	20 pack (CDR74W-20)	\$45
4x	50 pack (CDR74W-50)	\$107
4x	100 pack (CDR74W-100)	\$199

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IDE CD REWRITABLE

• Hewlett Packard 10x4x32 ReWritable •

Writes to CDR (write once) or CDRW (rewritable) media Supports packet write, 4 MB buffer, tray loading. IDE internal with software [C4492A]

• Plextor 8x4x32 ReWritable •

Writes to CDR (write once) or CDRW media. Supports packet write, 4 MB buffer, tray loading.

IDE internal with software, 1 R & 1 RW disk [PXW8432R] \$229 · Plextor 12x10x32 ReWritable ·

Writes to CDR (write once) or CDRW media. Supports packet write, 4 MB buffer, tray loading.

IDE internal with software, 1 R & 1 RW disk [PXW121032R] \$279

· Sony 10x4x32 Rewritable

Writes to CDR (write once) or CDRW media. Supports packet write, 4 MB buffer, tray loading.

IDE internal with software, 1 R & 1 RW disk [CRX145E] \$235

• Creative 8x4x32 Rewritable • Packet write, 2MB buffer, tray load.

IDE internal with software & 1 RW disk [SBCDRW8432]

• Acer 8x4x32 •

Packet write, 8MB buffer, tray load. IDE internal with software & 1 RW disk [CRW8432A] \$195

• Ricoh 8x4x32 •

Packet write, 4MB buffer, tray load.

IDE internal with software, 1 R & 1 RW disk [RW7080AK] \$215

· Yamaha 8x8x24 ReWritable · Writes to CDR (write once) or CDRW media. Supports packet

write. 4 MB buffer, tray loading.

We have upgrade controller card solutions for all of your storage needs. Our representatives will gladly assist you in choosing the best controller for your drive purchase.

SCSI CD RECORDERS

• Plextor 8x20 •

Packet write, 1MB buffer, caddy load w/tray/caddy adapter. Includes software and 1 disk.

Internal [PXR8020T]/External [PXR8020TX] \$299/\$389

• Teac 8x24 • Packet write, 4MB buffer, tray load w/software & 1 disk. Internal complete kit [CDR8X24TK]

SCSI CD REWRITABLE

· Yamaha 8x8x24 ReWritable ·

Packet write, 4MB buffer, tray loading. SCSI Internal [YCRW8824S] /External [YCRW8824SX] \$219/\$269

· Sony 10x4x32 ReWritable · Packet write, tray loading.

\$299/\$359 SCSI Internal [CRX145S]/External [CRX145SX]

· Hewlett Packard 8x4x32 ReWritable ·

Packet write, 4MB buffer, tray loading.

SCSI Internal [C4457A] /External [C4457AX] · CenDyne 12x4x32

Packet write, 4MB buffer, tray loading. SCSI Internal [CD1CD00028] / SCSI Ext. [CD1CD00028X] \$325/\$385

• Plextor 12x4x32 ReWritable •

Packet write, 4MB buffer, tray loading. SCSI Internal [PXW12432B]/SCSI Ext. [PXW12432BX] \$299/\$359

Sony 4x4x6 USB [CRX100E/X2] \$299

New CDR-Ws for 1394 & USB Teac 4x4x6 USB [CDW54EUSB] \$239

Sony 10x4x32 1394 [CRX145E/XI] \$429 Shop our website often...We're adding new products daily!

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RIGOH 8x4X32 IDE

Int. (RW7080AK) \$225 With software, 1 R & 1 RW disk

10x4x32 IDE

8x4x24 IDE

8x4x32 IDE

8x8x24 IDE

10x4x32 IDE

Int. (C4492A) \$275

Int. (YCRW8824E) \$219

Int. (YCRW8424E) \$219

Int. (PXW8432R) \$229

With software, 1 R & 1 RW disk

Int. (CRX145E) \$265

With software, 1 R & 1 RW disk



SONY

Yamaha

PLEXTOR.

PACKARD



8x4x32 SCSI

PACKARD

Int. (C4457A) \$279 Ext. (C4457AX)



12x4x32 SCSI CenDyne

Int. (CD1CD00028) \$325 Ext. (CD1CD00028X) \$385



yamaha' 8x4x24 SCSI

Int. (YCRW8424S) \$239 Ext. (YCRW8424SX) \$289



YAMAHA' 8x8x24 SCSI Int. (YCRW8824S) \$249



SONY



10x4x32 SCSI Int. (CRX145S) \$319

Ext. (YCRW8824SX) \$299

Ext. (CRX145SX) \$379



12x4x32 SCSI PLEXTOR.

Int. (PXW12432B) \$299

CD ROM READERS

· SCSI DRIVES ·

Brand	Model	Max Spin	Speed	Internal	External
Teac	CD532S	32X	85ms	\$75	\$165
Plextor	PX40TS(tray)	40X	85ms	\$93	\$183
Plextor	PX32CS(caddy)	32X	85ms	\$140	\$230
NEC	CDR3010	40X	85ms	\$72	\$162
Toshiba	XM6401B	40X	85ms	\$82	\$172
Kenwood	UCR415	52X	90ms	\$149	\$239
Kenwood	72X — Call for	details!			
WIDE SCSI DRIVES •					
Plextor	PX40TSUW	40X	85ms	\$99	\$189

Pioneer SCSI 24x 6 Disk external CD Changer \$395 · ATAPI DRIVES (IDE) · Speed 85ms Int Kit Max Spin Internal CD540E 40X \$49 **CDR3000** 40X 75ms \$49 \$79 SBCD52 100ms \$77 52X CRMCFX48X 48X 65ms \$47 \$77 CD650P 50X 85ms \$47 \$77 UCR412 52X 90ms \$82 \$112

Kenwood UCR421 72X 100ms \$112 IDE CD Rom Case for parallel printer port [PCMCIACD] \$59 HotPort External IDE CD case w/cable & card [HOTPORT] New Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live MP3+ [SBLIVEMP3+] We've got Labtec Speakers, Microphones & Headset Deals! Call

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· CD MASTERING SOFTWARE ·

Adaptec Easy-CD Creator \$30 w/drive purchase Retail \$90 Super easy to use. Supports Windows 95, 98 and Windows NT 3.51, & 4.x. Bundle version now supports Macintosh operating system. Win & Mac. Apple Toast CD-ROM Pro Retail \$85
The #1 mastering software for Macintosh. Supports Mac OS7 and later on

Macintosh or compatible.

Creative Digital Research HyCD for UNIX Retail version \$1559 HyCD Publisher works on SunOS, Solaris, and IRIX. It is used to develop Hybrid CD-ROMs integrating PC (ISO 9660 & Joliet), Macintosh (HFS), and UNIX (Rock Ridge) formats on a single CD-ROM. Note: Bundle versions may only be sold with a CD-R or CD-RW drive.

DVD DRIVES

COMIT ELI	- 14113				
MegaHaus 16X Drive kit [DVD16KIT]					\$179
Creative Encore 8X DVD Drive kit [CLDVD8KIT]					\$229
Bare	Interface	CD Speed	DVD Speed	Part #	Price
Toshiba	IDE	40X/80ms	12X, 90ms	SDM1402	\$115
Pioneer	IDE (slot)	40X/80ms	16X,110ms	DVD105	\$125
Pioneer	IDE (tray)	40X/80ms	16X, 110ms	DVD115	\$115
Pioneer	SCSI	40X/90ms	10X,120ms	DVD304	\$145
Hollywood MPEG-2 Decoder [HOLLYWOOD] \$69					
Waveless	wireless	transmitter	allows you	to transmit	DVD
movies fr	om comput	er to TV [PC	TOTV] \$119 or	\$109 w/DVD	drive.

CD MULTIDRIVE TOWERS

· CD ROM TOWERS ·

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4 DRIVE **SCSI TOWERS**

(Ask about our UltraWides)

Toshiba \$399

40X 79ms

Plextor \$439 | 40X 85ms Plextor \$779

7 DRIVE

SCSI

TOWERS

(We also carry NEC

Ethernet CD Towers - Built-in 10 baseT or 100 baseT Ethernet connection. Hooks directly to your network. Designed for mixed LAN environment - can be used simultaneously from Windows 95, NT, OS/2, DOS, and UNIX platforms using Novell Netware, Microsoft Networks, and NFS. Prices shown for 10base T, 10/100 also available. CALL.

Speed	Brand	7 Drive	Item #	13 Drive	Item #
40X	Plextor	\$1305	#PLEX40X7N	\$2259	#PLEX40X13T
40X	Toshiba	\$1195	#T0S6401X7N	\$2059	#T0S6401X13T
40X	NEC	\$1125	#NEC3010X7N	\$1925	#NEC3010X13T
52X	Kenwood	\$1739	#KEN415X7N	\$3049	#KEN415X13T

New! Auto Switching Ethernet CD Towers

Auto switches between 10 baseT or 100 base T Ethernet connection. Hooks directly to your network. Designed for mixed LAN environment - can be used simultaneously from Win 95, NT, Win for Workgroups, OS/2, HTTP, Mac, and UNIX. 40x drive speed, 8 drive tower. (MIT40X8N)

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Brand

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Creative

Mitsumi

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• IOMEGA 100N	B ZIP	,
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Internal IDE [ZIP100A] / 10 Pack [ZIP100A-10]	\$55/\$549
External SCSI [ZIP100]	\$92
Parallel External [PPZIP100]	\$102
External USB [ZIP100USB]	\$102
Zip media [ZIP100C] 2-9/10+	\$12/10
Ask about our 250MB Zip Drives & Me	dia.

· IOMEGA 2GB JAZ ·

Internal SCSI [JAZ2I]	\$309
External SCSI [JAZ2X]	\$315
Jaz 1 GB media [JAZ1GIGPC] 2-5/5-9/10+	\$80/77/75
Jaz 2 GB media [JAZ2GIGPC] 2-5/5-9/10+	\$85/80/77

OPTICAL DRIVE

• SONY 5.2 GIG •

Compatible with 51/4" 650MB, 1.3GB, & 2.6GB disks. \$1389/1529 SCSI Drive Int. [SMOF551] / Ext. [SMOF551X] \$83/80/77 5.2GB media (SMAX5.2) 1-4/5-9/10+

TAPE BACKUP

· SEAGATE 8GB TR4

4GB native and 8GB compressed capacity. Backup rate	up to
60MB/min. Includes DOS/Win backup software, cable & 1	tape.
Internal IDE, with 1 tape [STT28000A]	\$189
External IDE, with 1 tape [STT28000AX]	\$319
Internal SCSI, with 1 tape [STT28000N]	\$225
	\$295
HEWLETT PACKARD 10GB TR5 •	
Incl. backup soft. for Dos & Win, 1 tape & cable. TR5 tape	s \$43
SCSI Internal TR5 [C4394A]	\$365
	\$455
SEAGATE 10GB TR5 •	

SCSI TAPE DRIVES

Internal IDE, with 1 tape, cable & soft. [STT22000A]

External IDE, with 1 tape, cable & soft. [STT22000AX]

· 4MM DAT DRIVES ·

Cap. (Na	tive/Comp.)	Max Speed	Brand & Model	
2GB	4GB	66MB/min	Seagate STD24000N	\$419
4GB	8GB	60MB/min	Seagate DDS-2 STD28000N	C\$349
4GB	8GB	66MB/min	Seagate DDS-2 STD28000N	\$499
4GB	8GB	60MB/min	HP C1599AI DDS-2	\$509
10GB	20GB	100MB/min	Seagate STT2200BARE	\$279
12GB	24GB	144MB/min	Sony DDS-3 SDT9000AI	\$679
12GB	24GB	120MB/min	HP DDS-3 C1554AI	\$695
20GB	40GB	288MB/min	Sony DDS-4 SDT11000AI	\$969
48GB	96GB	48MB/min	Seagate STL496000N	\$1599
72GB	144GB	120MB/min	HP C5648A 6 tape loader	\$1669
160GB	320GB	840MB/min	Sony TSL-S11000 tape loader	\$2559
Media	1-4/5-9/1	0+ 120M	leter (DAT120M)	\$9/8/7
Media	1-4/5-9/1	0+ 125 N	Meter (DAT125M) \$20)/19/18
Media	1-4/5-9/1	10+ 150 M	Meter (DAT150M) \$45/\$	43/\$41
		• EXABYTE	8MM DAT DRIVES •	
7CD	14CD	120M/D/min	ELIANTO20	\$1140

		• EXABYTE	BMM DAT DRIVES •	
7GB	14GB	120MB/min	ELIANT820	\$114
20GB	40GB	360MB/min	EXB8900	\$195
140GB	280GB	180MB/min	EZ17SWK loader	\$434
Media :	2-4/5-9/1	0+ 160M	leter (DAT160M8MM)	\$12/11/1
· OHANTHM DIT DRIVES ·				

20GB-40GB 180MB	/min DLT4000	\$1279
Above as ext. our case	DLT4000X	\$1379
Above as ext. Qtm cas	e DLT4000QX	\$1539
40GB-80GB 600MB	min DLT8000	\$3799
Above as ext. our case	DLT8000X	\$3899
Above as ext. Otm cas	e DLT8000QX	\$3939
Media 2-4/5-9/10+	DLT3(DLT3)	\$36/34/32
Media 2-4/5-9/10+	DLT3XT(DLT3XT)	\$39/36/34
Media 2-4/5-9/10+	DLT4(DLT4)	\$69/\$67/\$65
2-4/5-9/10+ DLT CI	eaning Tape(DLTCLEAN)	\$40/39/36

AIT DRIVES . Sony, Seagate call for price. Compressed capacity is with maximum compression. Speed and amount of compression depends on your application. Autoloaders may require certain options to get advertised capacity.

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Make your CDs look more professional with the Signature color CD printer. Prints on CD printable media. Compatible with Win 3.1, 95 NT, and MacOS, **ONLY \$1069**

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DATA-PORT V Removable Drive Brackets

High quality construction. Gold plated connections. Features built in cooling fan, SCSI ID switch. Metal frame construction. Plastic cartridge with metal top and bottom covers. New IDE 66 is backward

compatible with AIA-33 unves.		
COMPLETE KIT	PLATINUM	BLACE
Includes 1 frame, and 1 cartridge		
IDE 66 with plastic cartridge (DP2200A66)	\$85	n/a
IDE 66 with metal cartridge (DP2200AM66)	\$95	\$109
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DP2200UW)	\$139	\$159
EXTRA CARTRIDGE		
Plastic IDE 66 (DPACART66)	\$42	n/a
Metal IDE 66 (DPACARTM66)	\$62	\$79
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DPUWCART)	\$69	\$89
EXTRA FRAME		
IDE 66 (DPAFRAME66)	\$52	
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DPUWFRAME)	\$79	

DATA-PORT VI Removable Drive Brackets

High quality construction. Gold plated connections. Features built in cooling fan with audible fan failure alarm,

SCSI ID switch. Metal frame and cartridge construction. PLATINUM BLACK COMPLETE KIT Includes 1 frame, and 1 cartridge

Ultra SCSI (DP2200SM)	\$89	\$129
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DP2200UWM) \$	149	\$169
SCA (uses SCA drives) (DP2200SCA) \$	139	\$159
EXTRA CARTRIDGE		
Ultra SCSI (DPSCARTM)	\$59	\$79
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DPUWCARTM)	\$89	\$109
SCA (uses SCA drives) (DPSCACART)	\$89	\$109
EXTRA FRAME		
Ultra SCSI (DPSFRAMEL)	\$59	
ULTRA WIDE SCSI (DPUWFRAMEA)	\$69	
SCA (DPSCAFRAME)	\$79	
ACCESSORIES for DataPort V and VI		
Cover plate (DPFPLATE)	\$8	\$1
Metal Carrying Case. Fully lined w/security lock (DPCASEM)	\$35	

Keep your data safe - in fact, this is the ultimate in data safety. you want to lock up your data . lock up your whole drive! With DataPort · You CAN take it with you when you go

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Seagate (formerly Veritas) (formerly Seagate)

Backup Exec	
Windows 95 & 98 (SBEWDWD)	\$
Windows NT workstation (SBENTWD)	\$
Windows NT/2000 Exchange Server Agent (SBENTEX006)	\$4
Windows NT/2000 SQL Agt E/F/G/S/I (SBENTSQ0007)	\$5
Windows NT/2000 Server En (SBENTSR0000)	\$5
Comell Ducinese Server Suite (SRENTSR)	¢4

Windows NT/2000 SQL Agt E/F/G/S/I (SBENTSQUOU/)	\$505
Windows NT/2000 Server En (SBENTSR0000)	\$569
Small Business Server Suite (SBENTSB)	\$429
Netware single server & unlimited users (SBENWSE)	\$449
Netware multi server (SBENWME)	\$829
NovaStor	
NovaBack CD contains backup software for DOS, Win 3.1,	
Windows 95, Win NT, and OS/2 Compatible with SCSI,	
IDE, and QIC drives (19801)	\$55
NovaBackup for Windows NT/2000	
Server (29801)	\$125
Workstation (29821)	\$59
NovaNet 8 for Windows	
SE for Windows NT/2000 (79210)	\$299
Single Server for NT/2000 (79230)	\$415
Unlimited for NT/2000 (79250)	\$715
NovaNet 8 for NetWare	
SE (79310)	\$319

Single Server for NetWare 25 User (79320) Single Server for NetWare 1000 User (79330)

Unlimited for NetWare 25 User (79340)

Unlimited for NetWare 1000 User (79350)

USB DRIVES & ACCESSORIES

100MB Zip Drive — Iomega USB 100MB Zip drive. Easy to install, simply connect to the USB port on your system and install the included software. #ZIP100USB \$102

4x4x6 CD Rewritable for PC or Mac — Master Cds with this complete kit. Includes mastering software and drive in high quality external USB case. #CRX100E/X2 \$299

2.2GB Orb - Revolutionary removable media storage by Castlewood Systems holds 2.2GB of uncompressed storage capaci-

ty. Includes a 2.2GB cartridge. #ORBUSB \$185 250MB Zip — Iomega USB 250MB Zip drive. Easy to install, simply connect to the USB port on your system and install the included software. #ZIP250USB

USB to SCSI Adapter — USB to SCSI adapter by Adaptec. Allows you to attach any SCSI device to the USB port.

Supports up to 7 SCSI devices. #USBSCSI SuperDisk Drive 120MB & Floppy — Imation LS-120
USB drive for iMac & Blue G3 systems. Reads Mac & PC for-Uses 1.4MB and 120MB disks. #USBLS120 \$139

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<i>3</i> 13:T		ok!	uca					
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ABWX6 ABBF6	PPGA PIII-600	5 6	1	1	2/168 3/168	810 440BX	ATX	\$107 \$100
ABWB6	PIII-733	3	1	AMF		810E	ATX ATX	\$100
ABBE62	PIII-600	5	- i	1	3/168	440BX	ATX	\$124
ABBX133	FCPGA	5	- 1	- 1	3/168	440BX	ATX	\$131
ABKA7	K7	6	1	1	4/168	VIA	ATX	\$141
ABKA7-100	K7 www.asus.co	_ 6	1	1	4/168	VIA	ATX	\$161
SKU	CPU	PC	IISA	AGP	MEM	CHPSET	STYLI	PRICE
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ASP299 ASP299B	PII-600	4	3	1	3/168	440ZX	ATX	\$99
ASP3V4X	PII-600 PII-733	3 6	2	1	3/168 4/168	440ZX VIA133	ATV	\$101
ASP3W	PII-733	5	2	1	3/168	810	ATX	\$109 \$98
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ASP3BF ASCUWE-RM	PII-600	5	2	1	4/168	440BX	ATX	\$120
ASCUA ASCUA	FCPGA FCPGA	3		AMR AMR	3/168 3/168	810 ALI	ATX	\$126 \$139
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ASK7V-WOA	K7	5		1	3/168	VIA	ATX	\$119
ASK7M-WA	K7	6	1	- 1	3/168	VIA	ATX	\$124
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ASK7V-WA	K7	5		1	3/168	VIA	ATX	\$126
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ASP2BD ASP2BS	DUAL	4	2	1	4/168	440BX	ATX	\$266
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ASP3CD	DUAL	5	_		3/RIMM	820	ATX	\$367
ASP2BDS	DUAL	4	2	1	4/168	440BX	ATX	\$439
ASP3CS	PII-733	5	1		2/RIMM	820	ATX	\$419
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FICAZ11	SOCKET A K7		۷	1	3/168	VIA/MVP	ATX	\$75 \$127
intel	www.intel.co	-		•	0/100	VIII	AIA	ΨΙΖΙ
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INSE440BX2 INVC820WA	PII-600 PIII-933	4	2	1	3/168 2/RIMM	440BX 820	ATX	\$106
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TYS1832DL TYS1952DLU	DUAL DUALXEON	5	1		4/168	440BX	ATX	\$166
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		9.5 MS/72002048K3.5"/1"H	
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LICE, I'M LOSING MY IDENTITY." THAT ONE CAUGHT HER BY surprise. Alice had brought the IAS shocks and Hotchkiss springs and bars as suitable gifts for this year's celebration of Bill's birth. It should have been a calm and quiet day. (Well, except for the clank of parts and rivulet of swear words flowing out from under Bill's S-10 pickup.)

She slapped the button that linked the video intercom system between the guyrage

Bill had built above the Basement of Doom and Pepsi-Cola and the BofD&P itself. "How about some gingko biloba?" She'd seen that on some billboard while tooling the byways of her beloved California.

"Nah, it's not that. My mind's still as sharp as, er, um, uh, well, that's not it. It's my name. You wouldn't understand because you have an ASCII-friendly name. Did you know nearly half the Web sites that want me to log in can't handle the apostrophe in my name? To almost 50 percent of the Internet I've become 'Bill OBrien' or, worse still, 'Bill Obrien.' That apostrophe in 'O'Brien,' and those two capital letters, are part of a rich Irish tradition."

"They won't accept the apostrophe or the double caps?" Sometimes it is best to let Bill run to conclusion.

"I don't want to be a preprocessed vanilla citizen of Netania, y'know? The stupid part of it all is that it's maybe three lines more of code to be able to accept the most common name variants that include symbols or multiple capital letters. People were dealing with the problem back in the days of Fortran and Cobol. Even I could code around it. You have to wonder just what low level of expertise these modern-day Net programmers pretend to have to get away with that."

"So what are you going to do?" The end was near. She could sense it.

"I think I'll give it a brief mention in the column. Maybe I can rabble-rouse some of the multitudes out of their apathy long enough to fire off an e-mail to



tional cornerstone of the Internet." "Yeah, there's that."

CALL THE FRIENDLY SKIES

When Virgin Atlantic Airways announced it would offer the big daddy of all call forwarding-from the ground to your cell phone miles above the earth—the world was instantly divided in two. The heavy cellphone users clapped and sang like small children, while the anti-cell-phone crowd imagined nightmarish scenarios of being trapped in coach beside a pea-brained meandering chatterer. Our stand on the issue aside, let's take a "Hard Edge" moment and check out the spectacular technology involved.

According to Virgin Atlantic, the Earth Calling program is easy to use. You get a special card from your cell-phone provider

ALICE & BILL

and carry it in your wallet. On an Earth Calling flight, you swipe the card through a reader in your seat's armrest and dial a registration number on your cell phone. Once you've been validated, your cell phone's call is redirected to your seat's headset. If you're not wearing the headset, the LCD monitor in front of you will alert you to the incoming call.

To deactivate the call forwarding, simply swipe the card through the armrest again. People calling from land are charged for the normal land part of the call, and the passenger is charged for the service.

What fascinated Alice was not the joy of overhearing a thousand inane conversations as she sits trapped in coach (Bill is wise enough to never, ever set foot on an airplane), but the thought that this may be the first time the phone number is separated from the phone. Yes, call forwarding existed on regular, old-fashioned telephones, but this concept of having a number and turning on and off the device of your choosing is really only beginning. Taking her patented

"Hard Edge"-to-the-farthest-point view, Alice can see a day when you may choose to receive calls on your friend's television or your Palm V.

It's funny in an ironic way, that the more wireless technology evolves, the more connected it makes other things. You and a number suddenly join in a far more meaningful way than the lifetime of phone numbers you've gone through up till now. The same is true of the connection possibilities. True, cell-phone calling can be annoying. but why not be able to place a call from your laptop on the beach or use your watch as the true "Dick Tracy" device? As the old AT&T commercial promised so many years ago: "You will." ("Six, two, and even—over and out." —Comic Bill.)

The big drawback, in Alice's mind, is the shouting. Americans in particular have come under fire (as usual) for having overly loud speaking voices when using their cell phones. Sociologists claim Americans aren't used to filtering out loud background noises the way Europeans are, so they overcompensate by shouting. Alice recalls loud American tourists all over the globe happily shouting without cell phones, but it's an irony that has come home to roost. Until Americans can truly tone it down and stop using their cell phones as megaphones, these important

advances will get only negative press instead of the fine applause they deserve.

Alice and Bill hereby suggest a logical technical pairing. Let the folks at Miracle-Ear create a boosted-volume earpiece that lets you hear the other caller clearly without straining. Talk about taking technology out of a niche and blasting it into the mainstream. (Hello, Miracle-Ear!) Once we've cleared that hurdle, Alice swears cell-phone hatred will die down. Meanwhile, if someone can figure out what to do about the loud tourists, Alice and Bill are all ears.

E-MAULED

Word has it CDNow isn't doing too well. (Note: CDNow was purchased by Bertelsmann at press time.) And lately (in "Hard Edge" time) even Amazon.com is suffering a downturn in its fortunes. As the official chroniclers of All Things Computer, Great and Small, we'd like to offer some suggestions to these two noble pioneers of the e-mall: "Knock it off!"

Without fail, CDNow sends Bill periodic reminders of its existence replete with suggestions that it knows exactly what songs he wants to buy. First and foremost, stop with the reminders. They're annoying. Bill has gone out of his way (to his neighborhood Sam Goody's) to buy tunes locally rather than go to the CDNow site just because of those reminders. And because Bill hasn't liked much music of the past 10 years (except whatever older groups have released), it's the height of CDNow arrogance to think it would know what Bill's eclectic selection of music might be on any given day. (Some days he listens to Dr. Laura just for the transition music between segments.)

So perhaps if CDNow would stop aggravating people (and as special as Bill may be, it's impossible that he's the only one who feels this way), maybe things would get better.

Don't worry, we haven't forgotten about Amazon.com. Here's a little tidbit from an order Bill recently placed and then canceled because of unavailability:

1 of: Red Devil Inc. 4251 5-In-1 Painters Tool [Tools & Hardware] By: Red Devil Inc. Ordered from publisher (This item has 4-6 week availability.) Cancel 1 copy

What's the deal here? Someone publishes a 5-in-1 painter's tool? Would that be in hardcover or paperback? (Perhaps one of the new Tools on Tape editions?)

And Bill canceled a "copy"?

We all know Amazon started as a book-seller. Cool beans. But it's branched out into other things (now tools, apparently). So why hasn't anyone at Amazon (Jeff, are you listening?) spent some quality time revising the template it's using for sales?

Sure, a book and a hacksaw are both commodities. And they're sold in roughly the same way. But nobody publishes a hacksaw. It's a manufactured "item," not a "copy." We're not asking Amazon to come up with smooth pickup lines that no inflatable woman could resist. It's just a matter of changing the two literals in the reporting script to variables that are keyed to the section you're shopping in.

Amazon, you can't keep applying the same template to every new category of product you start to sell. Ask Apple. Doing that almost killed the company. We're not doofuses on this side of the modem anymore. You have to make it at least look like you know what you're carrying.

SHORT TAKES

■ This year's PC Expo was hardly about PCs. It was about gadgets—especially wireless gadgets that get you online in some way. It was actually a return to the roots of

Microsoft argued IE should be free because everyone was on the Web. Everyone is also doing word processing and spreadsheets, so Microsoft Office should also be free.

PC Expo, which didn't start as a personal-computer exposition. More important, is it a hint that PCs are starting to get boring?

Thunderbird and Duron. No, they're not a futuristic sci-fi marionette show and an oil additive. They're AMD's newest CPUs. It took AMD more than a year to integrate its L2 cache on-die, and one of the first results is the Thunderbird. Now maybe the Athlons and the Pentium IIIs will show equivalent performance. Then there's the Duron, which some claim is AMD's Celeron killer. Yawn. Don't be surprised if Intel again one-ups AMD (if it hasn't already). We told you years ago AMD's number-one job was to play catchup with Intel. So now AMD's invented the Coppermine Pentium III and the Celeron.

ALICE & BILL

How about some innovation for a change?

Intel. Well, until Intel is ready to admit it made a huge mistake with RDRAM for the personal-computer marketplace, we

the personal-computer marketplace, we have a problem believing any of Intel's intel. In the words of Bill's one-time associate, Sal Hepatica, "Fuhgeddabowdit."

Despite incorporating 3,500 solar cells on a chip that's a tenth of an inch in diameter and barely one-thousandth of an inch thick, they're still crude and subject to further refinement. But keep your eye on electronic retinas. At some point you may need one—hopefully not—and it would be nice if it were all it could be, if you did.

MAIL BONDING

Reader Gary Chamberlain has come up with a suggestion for countering Microsoft's less-than-sterling behavior. We must admit it sounds pretty good—and we didn't think of it. According to Gary, Microsoft's original whine about Internet Explorer's freebie status was that everyone was on the Web. It made sense to include a browser as part of the operating environment. Gary reminds us, however, that

everyone is also doing word processing and spreadsheets. By Microsoft's logic, therefore, the company should also be including Microsoft Office as part of the operating environment—for free.

It's a simple yet totally diabolical suggestion that encapsulates all the elements of ironic justice.
What do you think? Send us

your opinion. And while you're at it, drop Bill an e-birthday card. It's not often a human being gets to be 34 for 16 years.

MASTERS OF THEIR DOMAIN

Alice got so despondent after not hearing from "Hard Edge" readers (Bill hogs all the snail mail and refuses to forward any to California), she set up her own Internet domain—alicehill.com. Stop by and sign the guest book, or drop Alice and Bill an old-fashioned letter.

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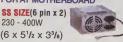
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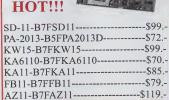


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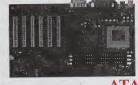
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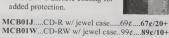
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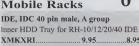
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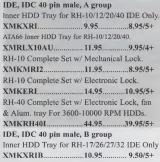
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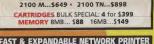
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4400 ... 1888 F 1610 ... 788 W 1610 ... 288
16 E ... 218
18 E ... 787
4400 ... 1888 F 1610 ... 788 W 1610 ... 288
E ... 280 W ... 388
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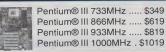
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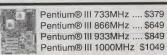
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1U/2U Dual Web Server

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4U Web Server



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4U Linux Raid 5 Server

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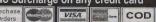
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TUNE-UP

building

scratch

brian bennett

you consider yourself a computer hobbyist, you've tinkered with your PC, upgrading components in an attempt to keep pace with ever-faster desktops. But there comes a time in every system's life when its motherboard just won't support current hardware choices. When this happens, you could easily order a fully configured box from one of many reputable vendors. But why settle for a system that's almost perfect when you can have exactly what your heart desires?

If you've got even a little technical knowledge under your belt, building a PC from scratch using the specific parts you crave is no sweat. What's more, you'll get a lot of satisfaction from the knowledge that you built it yourself, and you'll know your PC like the back of your hand.

Before you tackle a project this big, it's a good idea to map out your plan of attack in advance. Make sure you get all the necessary components and cables ahead of time so you don't get caught short. Have a Phillips-head screwdriver and a pair of long-nose pliers on hand, too. A Windows 98 CD-ROM and a Windows 98 startup disk on a floppy are also essential.

This month we set out to construct our own PC using quality components, but nothing so high-end that it would price the system right out of our budget. The game plan we followed is straightforward and should serve as a basic guide for your project. We decided to use the monitor, keyboard, mouse, and speakers from our original desktop, so that we could focus on the real meat and potatoes—building a solid system box. We ordered many of our parts through Arizona-based reseller TC Computers (www.tccomputers.com). Because TC's virtual store has such a wide selection, it can easily be a one-stop source.

For our system, we step chose an Enlight

EN-7237 midtower case (\$78.99 from TC). It's got plenty of expansion room, accommodates ATX motherboards, and has a 300-watt power supply. Our selected ATX motherboard was an Abit VT6X4 Slot 1 board, populated with a 733MHz Pentium III CPU and fan. TC sells the motherboard/CPU bundle for \$449. We also ordered a 128MB 133MHz Corsair SDRAM module (\$159.99) from TC, and inserted it into the board's

SIMM socket after we grounded our fingers against the metal power supply to avoid static discharge.

We removed the case's front bezel and two side panels, lowered the motherboard into the case, and screwed it into place. We made

processor-fan power cable was connected to the motherboard, the case fan was attached to the power supply, and the RAM and CPU were securely seated. Following the motherboard's

sure that the

instruction manual, we attached the power supply to the motherboard's main power socket and linked up the case's five LED and switch cables to the appropriate jumpers on the motherboard.

To minimize step potential problems, we initially installed only those drives necessary to get Windows 98 up and running: the floppy drive, the hard drive, and the DVD-ROM drive. We placed our new 3.5-inch floppy drive (\$12.99 from TC) into the floppy bay,



connected the floppy interface cable to the motherboard's floppy connector and the drive, and attached the drive's power connector. Alt ernate You can probably use your old PC's floppy drive to save a few bucks.

Our hard drive was a \$280 40GB DiamondMax Plus from Maxtor Corp. (www.maxtor.com). We made sure the jumpers were set to "master," then positioned the drive in the case's internal bay. After plugging the ATA/66 interface cable into the drive and the motherboard's primary IDE channel, we connected the power lead.

Our final acquisition from TC was a Creative Labs PC-DVD 8X

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Here's how the system we built from scratch stacks up against our benchmark reference system.

DVD-ROM drive (\$146.99). We set the drive's jumper to the "master" position (a setting we would need to change later, in step eight), mounted sliding guide rails (which came with the Enlight case) onto either side of the drive, and slipped the drive into the case's topmost drive bay. The drive didn't come with an interface cable, but fortunately, the motherboard did. We attached one end of the interface cable to the motherboard's secondary IDE channel and the other to the drive, then plugged in the drive's power supply. (With the robust CPU and graphics card we chose, we didn't need a dedicated hardware DVD decoder.) We then screwed all of the drives into place.

Alt ernate You can probably migrate over your existing IDE CD-ROM drive to save a few dollars, then replace it with a DVD-ROM drive in the future.

Next up was the Hercules Guillemot 3D Prophet II GTS graphics card (\$299.99), which is based on the speedy nVidia GeForce2 GTS graphics processor. First, we had to remove a temporary metal flap from the back of the case, which covered the backplane section of the expansion slot.

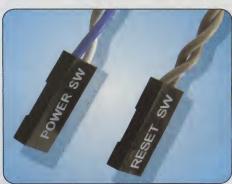


Before we could insert an expansion card, we had to remove a temporary flap covering the backplane of the case.

Here's where those pliers came in handy—for every expansion card we inserted, we had to remove these metal flaps. After locating the motherboard's AGP slot, we firmly seated the card into the slot and screwed the card's backplane to the chassis.

Alt ernate If you don't need screaming 3D graphics, you might be able to get by with your original graphics card.

With the minimum components in place for installing Windows 98, we were ready to power up the system. Leaving the case open, we plugged in the monitor, connected the keyboard and mouse, and plugged the system's power cable into the wall outlet.



The case manufacturer accidentally switched the labels of the power and reset cables.

We pressed the power button—and nothing happened. We pushed it again—still nothing. We pressed the reset button and the power light lit, the fans started to spin, but nothing else happened.

online resources

 \bigvee ou can find great bargains on PC components if you know where to look. It's worthwhile to investigate as many e-tailers as possible. For starters, check out TC Computers (www.tccomputers.com), where we were able to obtain many of our parts at great prices. Outpost.com is also a must-visit because of its free-shipping policy, and don't forget Computers4Sure.com, a shopping site that won a September 2000 Best Site award. Also check out ZDNet's Help and How-to Section (www.zdnet.com/zdhelp) for upgrade and tune-up tips. ▼

We were puzzled. We shut the system down (using the reset button) and investigated.

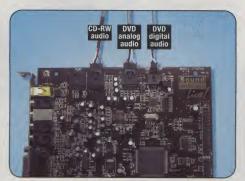
We realized that the floppy drive's cable was inserted incorrectly because a plastic knob on the cable's connector was in the way. We removed the extraneous piece of plastic and correctly inserted the cable. After snooping around further, we discovered that the case's reset and power-button cords were labeled incorrectly (thankfully, these cables are also color-coded), and we switched them to their correct positions.

With all that sorted out, we tried again. Our system successfully booted up (using the power switch), and we were able to enter the BIOS. From there we had to enable the Auto setting for both IDE controllers and enable AGP-4X Mode. We also had to disable the OnChip Sound setting, so it wouldn't conflict with the sound card we were planning to install in step seven.

A PC without an operating system is just a pricey paperweight, so installing Windows 98 was our next task. We booted up the system with the Windows 98 startup disk in the floppy drive. Once we were greeted by the DOS prompt, we confirmed that the boot disk's universal CD-ROM drivers successfully recognized the DVD-ROM drive, then used FDISK to format the hard drive. We inserted the Windows 98 CD into the DVD-ROM drive, launched Setup, and followed the onscreen prompts for installing the operating system.

Once we confirmed that Windows 98 was installed and running properly, we were able to proceed with installing the remaining device drivers and components. Since Windows had loaded the default SVGA driver for the graphics card during setup, we deleted its entry in Device Manager and rebooted the system. When Windows started up the next time, it detected the graphics card and gave us the option to install a driver from the card's installation disk. We also made sure to install the graphics card's DVD movie player software and the motherboard's 4x AGP and ATA/66 drivers.

Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live MP3 sound card (\$99) was next. We inserted it in one of the motherboard's five PCI slots and screwed the card's backplane to the chas-



sis. We then connected the DVD-ROM drive's CD-audio cable to the sound card's AUX

TUNE-UP

line. For the digital audio channel, the DVD-ROM drive was linked to the sound card by an S/PDIF digital cable. We then installed the sound card's drivers from its included CD-ROM.

Alt ernate Another way to save a few bucks is to use your existing sound card, but you'll likely give up some additional functionality, such as 3D sound support.

To equip our system with removable storage, we ordered an HP CD-Writer Plus 9310i CD-RW drive (\$299). First, we screwed rails to the sides of the drive, switched the DVD-ROM's jumpers to the "slave" position, made sure the CD-RW drive's jumpers were to set to "master," and placed the drive in

the middle 5.25-inch bay. We connected the CD-RW drive to the motherboard's secondary IDE channel, using the same cable the DVD-ROM drive was already using, so that both drives were daisy-chained together. We linked the CD-RW drive to the sound card's CD-audio connector with a CD-audio cable, and attached a powersupply lead to the drive. Then we installed the CD-RW drive's bundled applications.



The DVD-ROM and CD-RW drives slide in and out using guide rails, while the floppy drive is screwed into place.

The last component added was a 3Com U.S. Robotics 5610 56K PCI fax modem (\$99.95). We fit it into one of the system's PCI slots, screwed it in place, let Windows auto-detect the card, and then installed 3Com's drivers from the bundled floppy disk. Alt ernate As long as your old system has a 56Kbps modem, you can probably move the old modem to the new system.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Breathing a sigh of relief, we buttoned up the system case, replaced the front bezel, and admired a job well done. Our new PC operated perfectly and cost us a total of \$1,925.90. A similarly configured system from a direct vendor would probably cost about \$200 to \$300 less. While building your own PC may not save you money



Our finished system with all the components in place

over buying a new system (depending on how many of your old components you migrate over), you'll gain the confidence and pride that only come from hands-on experience. V

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E-MAIL E-MERGE?

Dear Alfred:

I have been trying to figure out how to send e-mail to several people so that it appears to each recipient that he or she is the only one receiving the message. The CC and BCC features don't do it.

Homer Bolton

Your standard e-mail programs, such as Microsoft Outlook or Netscape Communicator's Messenger, can't do what you want, but other mailing programs can. Go to ZDNet Downloads (www.zdnet.com/downloads), search for "e-mail merge," and you'll find lots of mail-merge utilities. These programs can pull names and addresses from a database or spreadsheet file. Some even let you customize your messages for each individual.

OUT-OF-CONTROL PANEL

Dear Alfred:

I recently opened Control Panel, and my system froze, forcing me to use the computer's reset button. Now the system freezes at random times, especially when I try to go online. I don't see any conflicts in Device Manager. Do you have any thoughts as to what's wrong?

Rudy Luttich

It may only be a coincidence that the problem started after opening Control Panel; you might have a component that's marginal or failing. Start by making sure that all your expansion cards and memory modules are properly seated.

Next, make sure that the Windows system files are not corrupted. Choose Start/ Programs/Accessories/System Tools/System Information, and then under Tools, choose System File Checker. This should restore any Windows 98 files that may have become damaged.

Finally, you could also extract fresh copies of the CPL (Control Panel) files, in case one

of them has become corrupted. The basic Control Panel files are stored on the Windows 98 CD in the file WIN98_28.CAB. To copy these files to your hard drive, you need to run EXTRACT.EXE, which can be found in the root folder of the Windows CD. Copy this program to the root folder of your C: drive, then open a DOS window and type the command

extract d:\win98_28.cab *.cpl /l c:\windows\system

assuming that D: is your CD-ROM drive.

PURGE PREVENTION

Dear Alfred:

My computer has been in the shop for repairs for two weeks, and while the system has problems, the hard drive is fine. I've set the options in Outlook to purge e-mails after five days. If I attach this hard drive as a slave ALFRED POOR

to another computer and fire it up, will my e-mails automatically disappear?

Nancy Forster

If Outlook is installed on the other computer, there is a good chance that it will erase the older messages. Before you run Outlook, make a backup copy of your Outlook files from the old drive, just in case. Then change the system date of the new machine so that it is set to the day the old system went into the shop. You should be able to open the old files and recover your mail, before you give Outlook a chance to purge the messages.

UNSTOPPABLE SCANDISK

Dear Alfred:

Whenever I run either ScanDisk or Disk Defragmenter, they restart about 10 times but never report a problem. What's happening?

Jeannette Harms

It may be that another program is running that is changing the disk's contents while these utilities are trying to do their work. One of the leading culprits is FastFind, which is part of Microsoft Office. Turn off FastFind, and you may find that ScanDisk and Disk Defragmenter can complete without restarting. V

tip of the month

WRITE RIGHTS

Is your data backed up? What happens when you restore it? Are you sure that it's going to do what you expect? This month's Tipster discovered a sneaky little problem.

Dear Alfred:

Inexpensive CD-RW drives make it easy and practical to back up hard drives to a rewritable CD. I recently had to restore some application files from

a backup disc, but the programs didn't run correctly. I discovered that the program files had been set to Read Only, so they weren't written over when I did the restore. So always check the attributes of files that you intend to replace during a restore.

Rich Gordon

That's a good point. You can check the attributes of a file in Windows Explorer by setting

the View to Details, and looking in the column to the right of the Modified column. An R indicates that the file is Read Only. You can change the attributes for a file by right-clicking

on the filename in Explorer and choosing Properties. On the General tab, you'll find checkboxes for the attributes.

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K6-2 500 145			AMD K6-2 3DNOW Technology	K6-2 500 169
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New AMD K7 Thunderbird™	New AMD K7 Thunderbird™	New AMD K7 Thunderbird™	800/850MHz	800/850MHz
700/750/800/850MHz 329/349/369/439	700/750/800/850MHz 299/319/339/399	700/750/800/850MHz 299/319/339/399	900/950MHz	900/950MHz
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800/866/933MHz395/515/685	667/733/800MHz395/405/445	667/733/800MHz395/405/445	800/866/933MHz	667/733/800MHz
Intel®Celeron® Processor with 128K Cache	866/933MHz 565/735	866/933MHz 565/735	Intel®Celeron® Processor with 128K Cache	866/933MHz 565/735
566/600/633/700MHz 185/195/225/265	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	Intel®Celeron® Processor with 128K Cache	566/600/633/700MHz 175/185/205/255	SUPPORT DUAL PENTIUM-III 133FSB CPUs
Intel®Pentium®III Processor	700/750MHz 395/410	566/600/633/700MHz 245/255/275/315	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	(2) 667/733MHz 620/645
700/750/800/850MHz 335/375/385/495	800/850MHz 435/555	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	700/750MHz 325/355	(2) 800/866MHz 735/975
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133MHz FSB (Front System Bus)	133MHz FSB (Front System Bus)	SUPPORT Single Slot 1 CPU 133MHz FSB (Front System Bus)	SUPPORT Single FCPGA CPU 133MHz FSB (Front System Bus)	Support Dual Intel 370-pin FCPGA P3 CPU 133/100MU
• (3) 168-pin DIMM sockets	• (3) 168-pin DIMM sockets	(4) 168-pin DIMM sockets	(3) 168-pin DIMM sockets	133/100MHz FSB Intel 82559 Ethernet Controller
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667/733MHz 345/365	667/733MHz 395/405	667/733MHz 345/385	667/733MHz	667/733MHz 555/565
800/866/933MHz 415/535/700	800/866/933MHz 445/565/735	800/866MHz 445/635	800/866/933MHz425/545/715	800/866MHz
Intel®Celeron® Processor with 128K Cache	Intel®Celeron® Processor with 128K Cache	933MHz 865	Intel®Celeron® Processor with 128K Cache	933MHz 8955
566/600/633/700MHz 205/215/245/285	566/600/633/700MHz 240/250/280/320	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	566/600/633/700MHz 215/230/255/295	SUPPORT DUAL PENTIUM-III 133FSB CPUs
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	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	Support Dual Intel 370-pin FCPGA P3 CPU
	700/750/800MHz 415/445/465	700/750/800MHz 610/635/655	700/750/800MHz 665/695/705	• 133/100MHz FSB
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1	Intel®Pentium®III Processor 700/750/800MHz475/505/515	Intel®Pentium®III Processor	ATX size	SUPPORT DUAL PENTIUM-III 133FSB CPUs
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ATI TECHNOLOGIES All-in-Wonder 128 16MB (AGP)	SIS 3D 4MB EDO DRAM PCI	27
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MaxiGamer Phoenix-2 nVidia TNT-2 Vanta sMB (AGP) 48 MaxiGamer Phoenix-2 nVidia TNT-2 Vanta 16MB (AGP) 46 MaxiGamer Cougar nVidia TNT-2 M64 32MB (AGP) 54 3D Prophet SDR nVidia GeForce-256 32MB (AGP) 75 3D Prophet DIR-DVI GeForce-256 32MB (AGP) 125 3D Prophet-II MX GeForce-27MX 32MB (AGP) 135 3D Prophet-II DDR GeForce-2 GTS 32MB (AGP) 269 3D Prophet-II DDR GeForce-2 GTS 32MB (AGP) 329 MEMORY PC100 / 133 SDRAM (Lifetime Warranty) 32MB 100 / 133MHz SDRAM, 7/8ns CALL 128MB 100 / 133MHz SDRAM, 7/8ns latest 256MB 100 / 133MHz SDRAM, 7/8ns pricing RAMBUS (Lifetime Warranty) 64MB RDRAM 700MHz 64MB RDRAM 700MHz for 64MB RDRAM 800MHz latest	3dfx Voodoo-5 5500 64MB 350MHz RAMDAC A	GP 279
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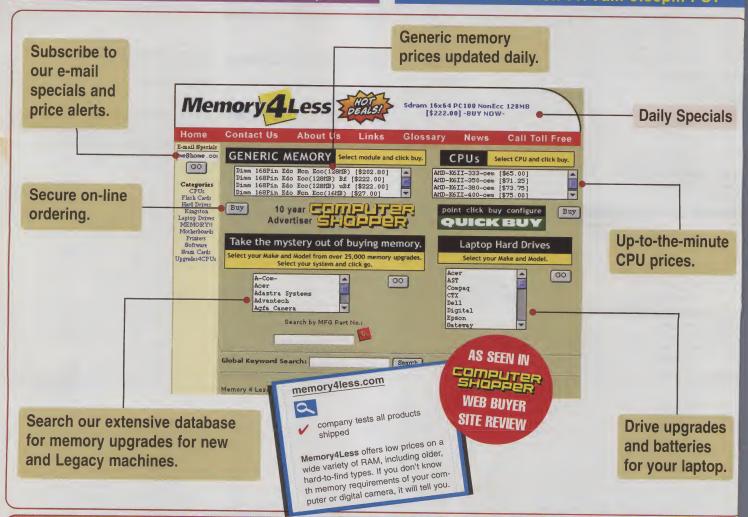
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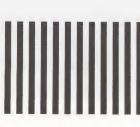
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BUYING ADVISOR

by Asa Somers

Language Lessons Via Web Cam

Finding affordable hardware, software, and a fast Net connection to link a language instructor in Honolulu with her students in Tokyo

OLDING REMOTE CORPORATE meetings was initially seen as the primary use for videoconferencing. But now that broadband access and inexpensive Web cams are taking this technology mainstream, independent entrepreneurs are starting to consider videoconferencing a compelling business tool.

Consider Jane Webb, a retired American expatriate living in Tokyo who teaches English to Japanese executives. Now that she's moving to Honolulu, she wants to take her part-time enterprise with her.

But her students require some face time, because demonstrating the proper method for producing spoken English and fine-tuning an accent are processes that are equally visual and aural, she says. "Videoconferencing suggested itself as a means to continue the kind of language tutoring that I have been doing. I need the best video and speech capability that can be had, for the best dollar."

We immediately advised Webb that even with a DSL or cable modem mainlining data into her computer, video phone calls suffer from substantial graininess and herky-jerky frame rates. Nonetheless, some video is better than none at all.

Webb already has a notebook that's

capable of videoconferencing, a new \$2,495 Sager 3360V outfitted with an 800MHz Pentium III processor, 256MB of RAM, a 14-inch screen, and an ATI Rage LT Pro AGP graphics subsystem with 8MB of SGRAM. Beyond that, she'll need a

high-speed connection, videoconferencing software, a desktop video camera, and a microphone.

Perhaps the most critical for both Webb and her students is a fast Internet connection. In Honolulu, we found a number of companies providing residential DSL ser-

vice. Hawaii Internet Technology
Solutions served up the best deal, with a monthly charge of \$77.50. Road Runner cable-modem service is also available in many parts of town, and at \$49.95 monthly, it's an even better deal (although Webb would have to pay an additional \$150 for installation of the modem and network interface card). At this point, however, Webb isn't quite sure where she'll be living,

CHALLENGE

USER PROFILE

Jane Webb, an American who teaches English as a second language to Tokyo executives.

COMPUTING NEEDS

A fast Internet connection, capable videoconferencing software, and an easy-to-use Web cam.

so she'll have to contact the ISPs when she arrives to find out if broadband is available in her neighborhood.

The second thing to consider is videoconferencing software. There are two main options: Microsoft NetMeeting, which is available for free at www.microsoft.com/windows/netmeeting (it's also bundled with

most new computers and Web cams), and CUseeMe Pro, which costs \$69 when you download it from the company's Web site (www.cuseeme.com).

The two programs are similar; both offer extras

The Intel PC Camera Pro Pack like whiteboard functional-

ity, text chat, and application sharing. Although CUseeMe is the only program to support multiuser conferencing sessions of up to 12 participants, NetMeeting generally offers smoother video in one-on-one sessions. Given the price differential, we'd go with NetMeeting.

BUYING ADVISOR



Next up: the Web cam. Things to consider include ease of use, bundled software, and image quality. There's no shortage of promising candidates. One good choice is 3Com's HomeConnect, a USB-based camera that handles up to 1,280x960 resolution and is known for its smooth video and ease of use. It's also backed by a five-year parts-and-labor warranty and ships with a 9-foot cable that detaches from the back of the camera for easy setup and breakdown. We found the device online for \$118.75 at firstsource.com (www.firstsource.com).

Ezonics' EZDual Cam is another highly rated product, one that doubles as a standalone still camera. We found it for \$123 at auction on Egghead (www.egghead.com). The camera comes with lots of great software but only a one-year warranty.

The Intel PC Camera Pro Pack might be Webb's best bet. Like the others, it offers USB connectivity and features a snapshot button for taking digital stills. It comes with a 9-foot cable, and its image quality and videophone software bundle are critically acclaimed. We found the Intel PC Camera Pro Pack for \$94.95 plus shipping at buy.com (www.buy.com). An optional clip for mounting the camera on a laptop bezel is available directly from Intel for \$10.

Any of these three cameras would fit Webb's needs, but we're giving the nod to the Intel product. It's less expensive, provides high-quality pictures, and offers some pretty sweet features. With

SOLUTION

THE ADVISOR'S CHOICE

In Honolulu, the best deal on broadband Net access is a cable modem from Road Runner, at a cost of \$49.95 per month plus \$150 for installation and a network interface card. An even better deal is Microsoft NetMeeting conferencing software, which is available free. As for the camera, the Intel PC Camera Pro Pack fuses great hardware and software in a package priced at only \$94.95.



NetMeeting and a broadband Internet account, Webb will likely have about as good a videoconferencing experience as can be expected, given the current state of the technology.

If you want help making a smart buying decision, e-mail the Buying Advisor at buying advisor@zdnet.com.



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INDEX

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PROLINIA DESKTOP 450	11	19	48	90	
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THINKPAD 500,510	3646			
THINKPAD 701C, 701CS	2743	68		
CL57SX, THINKPAD 700, 720	39			
750/C/CE/CS/P, 755C/CS/CD/CE/CSE/CV/C				
THINKPAD 760LD,760L,760CD,760C	4148.	89		
THINKPAD 760E / ED/ EL/ ELD	2633.	85		
THINKPAD 600,770E/ED/X, I SERIES	39	45	89148	
THINKPAD 850 POWER SERIES	39	45	89149	
COMPAG	0440	1/110	20110 64	100
COMPAQ LTE ELITE 486 SERIES CONTURA 4/25, 4/25CX, 4/25C	8MB	I OMB	32MD04	120
CONTURA 4/25 4/25CV 4/25C	20	74	0(24140)	
CONTURA 400/410/420/430	29	/0	75(24MB)	
			73(24140)	
CONTURA AERO SERIES,	39	03		
CONCERTO 4/33, 4/25, LTE LITE 4/33C, 4/25E, 4/25C, 4/25		47 EO		
LIE LITE 6000 6200 6260 6290 6200	E 400 44		00 100	
LTE LITE 5000,5200,5250,5280,5300, ARMADA 1500 SERIES, 7000 SERIES,	340044	34	85 159	
ARMADA 4100, 4200 SERIES	36	46	84 149	
ARMADA 1100,1120, 112OT, 1125	31	49	109 147	
ARMADA 1700,6500,7400,7800,PROSIGNIA	4 100 6000 SE	RIFS	62 99	
ARMADA 1130T,1130				
PRESARIO 1000 SERIES	20	40	100	
PRESARIO 1200, 1600, 1800 SERIES	21	20	40 00	145
			32MB.64M	
AST			JZMD.O-MI	
ASCENTIA 800N, 810N ASCENTIA 900N ,910N SERIES	4146	64		
ASCENTIA 900N ,910N SERIES	46	59		
ASCENTIA 950N SERIES				
ASCENTIA J10,J20,J30,J50,J55,				

ASCENTIA P30,P50,P70, P80 ASCENTIA A SERIES, M5000, M6000 SER	
TOSHIBA	8MB16MB.32MB.64MB.128M
T1900 SERIES, T4500, T4600, T4700, T4800 T2100 SERIES	384469(24MB)
PROTEGE 7000, 7010,7020 SERIES	4574127
SATELLITE PRO 100/200/400 SERIES SATELLITE PRO 300 SERIES, 440,445,46	395384
SATELLITE 4000 SERIES, 8000 SERIES TECRA 750, 780 SERIES	4589148
TECRA 700CS, T700CT	5575
TECRA 710, 720, 730, 740	39538917932
LIBRETTO 100CT, 110CT, 110CT-NT, PROTEC	3E 3000 SERIES94

	DELL	4MB.8MB16MB32MB.64MB
	LATITUDE 475MC, 450MC, 450MCX	
	LATTITUDE XPI CD M133ST, M166ST	284989
	LATTITUDE XP, XPI SERIES	
	LATTITUDE LM SERIES	
	LATTITUDE CP SERIES	85159
M	LATTITUDE CP, CPI SERIES	5989139
	INSPIRON 3000 SERIES, 3200,7000 SEI	RIES105
	CTX	.8MB16MB32MB.64MB
	EZ BOOK 700 SERIES, CTX X 95SNS	
	EZ BOOK 700E SERIES, 800SERIES	
	GATEWAY	8MB16MB32MB.64MB
	COLORBOOK 486SX,486DX2, 486DX4	
	HANDBOOK 486 SUBNOTEBOOK	
	LIBERTY DX2/50, DX4/100	
	SOLO S90, S120, V75, V90 NOTEBOO GATEWAY SOLO 2100,2200	4369105
	GATEWAY SOLO 2300, 2500 SERIES	
	SOLO 3100 XL/LS/SE, 5150 XL/LS/XE	43 61 99
١	SOLO 9100 PENTIUM II, PENTIUM MM	
	SOLO 5100 PENTIUM II, PENTIUM MM.	

STANDARD MEMORY	
72PIN SIMMS NON PARITY 4MB 1X32-60NS\$14 16MB 4X32-60NS\$14 16MB 4X32-60NSCALL 32MB 8X32-60NSCALL 72PIN EDO SIMMS	(
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*THINKPAD MEMORY UPGRADES
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	70000
40MB\$58\$98	
BOMB\$65\$105	- 13000
1080MB\$150\$190	- 930000
MEMORY UPGRADES	THE RESERVE THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO I
ALL POWER MACS 6100,6200,7100,8100,	THE PARTY OF THE P
QUADRA 840AV, 800,660AV,650,630,610,60	
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INDEX

COMPUTER SYSTEMS

Desktops

Pentium III, Pentium, AMD Duron, AMD Athlon, AMD K6-2, Celeron, Bare Bones, Industrial PCs, Multi-processor, Rack Mount, Servers, Terminals/Workstations

PDAs/Palmtops/HPCs

Portables

Pentium III/II, Pentium, AMD K6, Celeron, 486

Macintoshes

PERIPHERALS

263

261

Digital Cameras

Input Devices

Graphics Tablets, Keyboards/Keypads, Mice, Trackballs

Modems

External Fax, Internal Fax, PC Card, Voice/Data

Monitors

19" & Larger, 17", 15" & Smaller, LCD Flat Panel

• Office Equipment

Copy/Fax Machines, Multifunction Peripherals, Point-of-Sale, Misc. Office Equipment

Plotters

Presentation Equipment

Dot Matrix, Inkjet, Laser (Color), Laser (Monochrome), Portable, Print Servers/Sharing Units, Thermal Wax, Misc. Printers

Scanners

Bar-Code, Desktop, Handheld

Speakers/Headphones

Storage Devices

CD-ROM Drives, CD-Recordable/Rewritable Drives, Duplication Systems, DVD-ROM Drives, Floppy Disk Drives, LS-120, Hard Drives, 9-Track Tape Drives, Optical Storage, RAID Storage, Removable Storage, Tape Drives

Video Conferencing

COMPONENTS

 General Components Cables/Connectors, Chassis/Cases, CPU Cooling Fans, CPU Upgrades, CPUs, Memory Upgrades

Add-In Cards

Controller Cards, Graphics/Accelerator Cards, Memory Cards, Sound Cards, Video Controllers & Equipment

Motherboards

PC Card Equipment

Miscellaneous Components

ACCESSORIES

266

Electrical Accessories

Batteries, Power Strips/Surge Suppressors, Switch Boxes Uninterruptible Power Supplies

Disk Accessories

Notebook Accessories

Carrying Cases, Notebook/Laptop Hard Drives, Portable CD-ROM Drives, Portable CD-Recordable Drives, Portable DVD-ROM Drives, Portable MP3 Music Players, Misc. Notebook Accessories

Printer Supplies

Printer Expansion Memory, Toner/Inkjet Cartridges, Misc. Printer Supplies

Storage Media

Test Equipment

Miscellaneous Accessories

NETWORKING/COMMUNICATIONS EQUIP.....267

SOFTWARE & CONTENT

267

Applications Software

Accounting/Finance/Tax/Investment, Communications, Database Management, Desktop Publishing, Education/Training, Fonts, Graphics, Integrated, Internet, Languages/Tools, Multimedia, Networking, PIMs, Point-of-Sale, Project Management, Security, Spreadsheets, Utilities, Voice Recognition, Word Processing

Operating Systems/GUIs

Books/Catalogs/Videos

267

Data Conversion/Disk Duplication

Training/Business

Web Hosting

Miscellaneous Services

ccess

of it's for sale direct, you'll find it in the Product Index, a complete listing of all the products advertised in this issue of Computer A Shopper. The page numbers refer to advertisers who carry each type or brand of product.

COMPUTER **SYSTEMS**

Desktops

Pentium III

Aberdeen LLC • 297

ABS Computer Technologies • 16

Adamant Computers • 238

American STI • 121

Anchorharbor.com • 277

Atlas Micro • 74

Avantgarde • 256

Axis Systems • 42

Caliber Computer Corp • 163

Compaq Computer Corp • 21, 48

Compaq Consumer Direct . 156,

Compaq Direct Plus • 30

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Cyber Power • 60

Dell Computer Corp • COV2-COV4.

1, 6, 65, 134, 146, 187, 202

Dell Factory Outlet • 247

E-Machines • 48

Gateway 2000 • 45, 47, 55, 57

Hewlett-Packard . COV5-COV6,

21, 48, 123, 127

Hotdeals4less.com • 212

IBM Corporation • 10, 48

iBUYPOWER • 95

Interpro Microsystems • 242

Micro Pro • 50, 249

Micron Electronics • 99

Shop Acer • 183, 185

Syscon • 121

Systemax • 100

Thortek • 226

Tiny Computers • 62

Treasure Chest Peripherals • 291

United Micro • 97

Pentium

Compaq Factory Outlet • 255

AMD Duron

Aberdeen LLC • 297

Adamant Computers • 238

American STI • 121

Atlas Micro • 74, 90

Cumetrix Data Systems • 88

Cyber Power • 60, 87

iBUYPOWER • 95

Micro Pro • 50, 249

MidWest Micro . 86

Nutrend • 91

Syscon • 121

United Micro • 97

Vega PC • 93

AMD Athlon

Aberdeen LLC • 297

Adamant Computers • 238

AMD (Advanced Micro Devices)

American STI • 121

Anchorharbor.com • 277

Atlas Micro • 74, 90

Avantgarde • 256

Axis Systems • 42, 92

Compaq Consumer Direct • 79

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Cumetrix Data Systems • 88 Cyber Power • 60, 87

Gateway 2000 • 85

Hotdeals4less.com • 212

iBUYPOWER • 95

Micro Pro • 50, 249

MidWest Micro • 86

Nutrend • 91

Syscon • 121

TigerDirect • 84

United Micro • 97

Vega PC • 93

AMD K6-2

Aberdeen LLC • 297

Anchorharbor.com • 277

Avantgarde • 256

Compaq Computer Corp • 48

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Cyber Power • 60, 87

Hewlett-Packard • 48

Hotdeals4less.com • 212

iBUYPOWER • 95

Interpro Microsystems • 242

Micro Pro • 249

Nutrend • 91

Celeron

Aberdeen LLC • 297

ABS Computer Technologies • 16

Adamant Computers • 238

Atlas Micro • 74

Compaq Direct Plus • 30

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Cyber Power • 60

Dell Computer Corp • COV2-COV4, 65, 134, 146, 187

E-Machines • 48

Gateway 2000 • 47

Hewlett-Packard • COV5-COV6, 200, 300

IBM Corporation • 10

iBUYPOWER • 95

Interpro Microsystems • 242 Micro Pro • 50, 249

The Computer Shopper Product Index lists the products, services, and advertisements appearing in the current issue (except those in the Showcase section). The staff has made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of the index. However, Computer Shopper does not warrant the accuracy of information and is not responsible for any errors appearing in the Product Index. Note that advertisements or changes to ads received after the Material Due deadline may not be included in the Product Index

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Desktops (continued)

Tiny Computers • 62

Bare Bones

Adamant Computers • 238 Case Depot • 236 Ever Han Corp • 230

Interpro Microsystems • 242 Jinco Computers • 230

Micro Pro • 249

Team Force • 236

United Micro • 97

Industrial PCs

Case Depot • 236 Ever Han Corp • 230 Jinco Computers • 230 Team Force • 236

Multiprocessor

Aberdeen LLC • 297 ABS Computer Technologies • 16 Adamant Computers • 238 Caliber Computer Corp • 163 Compaq Direct Plus • 30 Dell Computer Corp . COV2-COV4, 65, 146, 202 Interpro Microsystems • 242 Micro Pro • 50, 249 United Micro • 97

Rack Mount

Wetex International (USA) Corp • 216

Servers

Aberdeen LLC • 297 ABS Computer Technologies • 16 Adamant Computers • 238 Caliber Computer Corp • 163 Compaq Computer Corp • 21, 48 Compaq Direct Plus • 30 Dell Computer Corp . COV2-COV4, 65, 146, 202 Dell Factory Outlet • 247 Gateway 2000 • 57 Hewlett-Packard • 48, 123 IBM Corporation • 48 Interpro Microsystems • 242 Micro Pro • 50, 249

Terminals/Workstations

Aberdeen LLC • 297

United Micro • 97

ABS Computer Technologies • 16 Adamant Computers • 238

Axis Systems • 42

Caliber Computer Corp • 163

Case Depot • 236

Dell Computer Corp . COV2-

COV4, 65

Dell Factory Outlet • 247

Ever Han Corp • 230

Hewlett-Packard • 127

iBUYPOWER • 95

Interpro Microsystems • 242

Jinco Computers • 230

Team Force • 236

PDAs/ Palmtops/ **HPCs**

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 139, 154, 237

Compaq Computer Corp • 152

Handspring • 21, 152

Harmony Computers • 138

Hewlett-Packard • 152

iBUYPOWER • 95

NEC Computer Systems • 152

Palm • 21, 48, 152

Seiko Instruments USA • 21

Sharp Electronics Corp • 291

Portables

Pentium III

Acer America Corp • 152, 200,

Compaq Computer Corp • 138, 152, 219

Compaq Consumer Direct • 156

Compaq Direct Plus • 30

Dell Computer Corp • COV2-

COV4, 134, 176, 187

Dell Factory Outlet • 247

Fujitsu • 152

Fujitsu PC Corp • 115, 117

Gateway 2000 • 57, 112

Hewlett-Packard • 104, 152

IBM Corporation • 10, 152, 219

Prostar Computer • 14, 108

Sager • 36, 51

Sony Corp of America • 21, 138,

139, 152, 219

Toshiba America • 48, 138, 152,

219, 291

WinBook Computer Corp • 111

PRODUCT INDEX

Windrover Company • 77

Pentium II

Compag Computer Corp . 152,

IBM Corporation • 219

Sony Corp of America . 152,

219

Toshiba America • 152, 219

Pentium

Compaq Computer Corp • 240,

Compaq Factory Outlet • 255

Hewlett-Packard • 240

IBM Corporation • 240, 260

NEC Computer Systems • 240

AMD K6

Compaq Computer Corp • 48, 138, 139, 152, 219, 240

Hewlett-Packard • 89, 152

IBM Corporation • 152

Toshiba America • 138, 152,

219

Vega PC • 93

Celeron

Acer America Corp • 152

Compaq Computer Corp • 152,

219, 240

Compaq Consumer Direct • 156

Dell Computer Corp • COV2-

COV4, 65, 134, 146, 176,

Fujitsu • 48, 152

Gateway 2000 • 112

Hewlett-Packard • 104, 125,

IBM Corporation • 8, 10, 48, 152,

219

Prostar Computer • 108

Sager • 36, 51

152, 219

Sony Corp of America • 152

Toshiba America • 48, 138, 139,

486

True Data Products • 240



PERIPHERALS

Digital **Cameras**

Agfa Corp • 237 Canon Computer Systems • 138, 152, 219, 237 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 Eastman Kodak Co • 13, 21, 138, 139, 152, 219, 237, 290 Epson • 104, 138, 139, 237, 291 Fuii • 139, 152, 219, 237 Hewlett-Packard • 104 Intel Corp • 291 Minolta Corp • 152 Nikon • 138, 139, 152, 219, 290

Olympus Image Systems • 48, 138, 139, 152, 200, 219, 237 Panasonic • 152

Ricoh Corp • 138, 290

Sony Corp of America • 138, 152,

219, 237 TechWorks • 278

Toshiba America • 138, 139, 219, 237

Input **Devices**

Graphics Tablets

Wacom Technology • 138

Keyboards/Keypads

Antec • 226 Apple Computer • 260 Cherry Electrical Products • 54 Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Focus Electronic Corp • 249 Genovation • 54 Key Tronic Corp • 226 Logic Controls • 54 Micro Pro • 249

Microsoft Corp • 226, 241, 249,

MicroSpeed • 226

Mitsumi Electronics Corp • 241,

290

Thortek • 226 TigerDirect • 268 Ultima Group USA • 226

Mice

Apple Computer • 260 Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Key Tronic Corp • 226 Logitech • 249, 290 Microsoft Corp • 241, 249

Mouse Systems Corp • 226 Thortek • 226

Mitsumi Electronics Corp • 241,

TigerDirect • 268

Trackballs

Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Logitech • 249

Modems

External Fax

249, 290, 294, 297 Archtek • 297 Creative Labs • 226, 238 Diamond Multimedia Systems (Supra) • 238, 297 Lucent Technologies • 241 Phoebe • 249 Pine Technology • 297 Rockwell • 241 **Thompson Computer Warehouse**

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 226,

Internal Fax

• 241

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 152, 154, 224, 226, 238, 249, 290, 297 Archtek • 297 Creative Labs • 224, 226, 233, Diamond Multimedia Systems (Supra) • 238, 290 IBM Corporation • 152 Jaton Corp • 233 Lucent Technologies • 233 Motorola • 152, 154, 233 Phoebe • 238, 249 TigerDirect • 268

PC Card

Xircom • 152

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 152, IBM Corporation • 152

Motorola • 152 Phoebe • 249 Xircom • 152

Voice/Data 3Com Corp/US Robotics • 154, 224, 238, 249, 290, 294 Archtek • 297 Creative Labs • 224, 226, 238 Diamond Multimedia Systems (Supra) • 238, 290 Phoebe • 238, 249 Pine Technology • 297 Thompson Computer Warehouse • 241 TigerDirect • 268

Monitors

19" & Larger

CTX International • 226, 237 Hitachi • 226, 242 Hyundai Display Products • 297 liyama North America • 15 KDS USA • 226, 241, 290, 297 Mag Innovision • 226, 242, 290 Micro Pro • 249 Mitsubishi Electronics America • 237, 242, 297 NEC Technologies • 226, 237, Optiquest • 237, 294 Princeton • 237, 249 Relisys • 224, 241, 294 Sony Corp of America • 237, 242, 297 Tatung Company of America • 297 Thortek • 226

17" Acer Peripherals • 290 CTX International • 237 Hitachi • 226, 242 Hyundai Display Products • 129, 297 livama North America • 15 KDS USA • 226, 241, 290, 297

Mag Innovision • 242, 290

MGC (Max Group Corp) • 241

ViewSonic • 18, 104, 224, 226,

237, 241, 242, 288, 294, 297

ViewSonic • 18, 104, 224, 226, 237, 241, 242, 294, 297 15" & Smaller Acer Peripherals • 290

Micro Pro • 249

237, 242

• 226, 237

• 297

Thortek • 226

Mitsubishi Electronics America

NEC Technologies • 200, 226,

• 200, 237, 242, 297

Optiquest • 237, 294

Princeton • 237, 249

Relisys • 224, 241, 294

Samsung Electronics America

Sony Corp of America • 237,

Tatung Company of America

CTX International • 237 Hyundai Display Products • 297

IBM Corporation • 48 KDS USA • 290

Mag Innovision • 226 MGC (Max Group Corp) • 241

Micro Pro • 249

NEC Technologies • 226, 237

Nurol Corp • 215 Optiquest • 237

Proview Technology • 241 Relisys • 224, 241, 294

Sony Corp of America • 237

Tatung Company of America

• 297

Thortek • 226

ViewSonic • 18, 104, 224, 237

LCD Flat Panel

Hyundai Display Products • 297 liyama North America • 15 Nurol Corp • 215 ViewSonic • 18, 48, 104, 224, 278, 288, 291

Office Equipment

Copy/Fax Machines

Brother International Corp • 237 Canon Computer Systems • 237 Epson • 237 Hewlett-Packard • 237

Okidata Corp • 237 PanaFax • 237 Panasonic • 237 Ricoh Corp • 237 Sharp Electronics Corp • 237 Xerox Corp • 237

Multifunction **Peripherals**

Brother International Corp • 237 Canon Computer Systems • 237 Hewlett-Packard • 104, 226, 237 Okidata Corp • 237 Panasonic • 237 Sharp Electronics Corp • 237

Point-of-Sale

American Microsystems • 54, APG Cash Drawer • 54 Axiohm Cognitive Solutions • 215, Barcode.com • 218 Citizen America Corp • 214, 215 Cougar Mountain Software • 3 Crichlow Data Sciences • 214 Data Vision • 214 Direct P.O.S. • 214 Eltron International • 215, 218 Epson • 215, 218 IBM Corporation • 215

IBS • 215 Indiana Cash Drawer Co • 54, 215

Ithaca Peripherals • 215 Logic Controls • 54, 214

Mag-Tek • 54

Metrologic Instruments • 214, 215

microbiz.com • 218 MMF Cash Drawer Co • 54, 214. 215

NJCR Technologies • 54

Nurol Corp • 215 Opticon • 214

P.O.S. International • 214

PC America • 54

Percon • 215, 218

Point of Sale Solutions • 215

PSC • 214, 215

PRODUCT INDEX

Office Equip. (continued)

Samsung Electronics America
• 215

Star Micronics America • 214, 215

Symbol Technologies • 215 Unitech Systems • 54 Worthington Data Solutions

• 213

Misc. Office Equipment

Nurol Corp • 215

Plotters

Hewlett-Packard • 237

Presentation Equipment

Adtech • 216

AV Marketplace • 216

Canon Computer Systems • 21

Creative Labs • 290

Epson • 216

Hitachi • 216

PLUS Corp • 216

Polaroid Corp • 21

Proxima Corp • 216

Toshiba America • 216

ViewSonic • 288

Printers

Dot Matrix

Epson • 237

Lexmark International • 237

Okidata Corp • 237

Panasonic • 237

Inkjet

Brother International Corp • 152,

Canon Computer Systems • 139,

152, 237

Citizen America Corp • 152

Epson • 104, 138, 139, 226, 237,

290, 291

Hewlett-Packard • 13, 48, 152,

226, 237, 291

Lexmark International • 226, 237,

291

Thortek • 226

Laser (Color)

Canon Computer Systems • 237 Hewlett-Packard • 237

Lexmark International • 237

Minolta Corp • 237

NEC Technologies • 237 Okidata Corp • 237

QMS • 237

Tektronix • 237

Xerox Corp • 237

Laser (Monochrome)

Brother International Corp • 237 Canon Computer Systems • 237

Epson • 237

Hewlett-Packard • 21, 48, 104,

226, 237, 290 Lexmark International • 226,

237

Minolta Corp • 237

NEC Technologies • 200, 237

Okidata Corp • 237

Panasonic • 237

Xerox Corp • 237

Portable

Canon Computer Systems • 152 Citizen America Corp • 152

Print Servers/ Sharing Units

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Thermal Wax

Tektronix • 237

Miscellaneous

Axiohm Cognitive Solutions • 215,

218

Barcode.com • 218

Citizen America Corp • 54, 214,

215

Cognitive Solutions • 54

Data Vision • 214

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278

Dymo (Esselte Group) • 21

Eltron International • 215, 218

Epson • 54, 215, 218, 237

Ithaca Peripherals • 54, 215

Mega Haus • 220

Nurol Corp • 215

PC America • 54

Samsung Electronics America

• 215

Star Micronics America • 54, 214, 215

Scanners

Bar-Code

American Microsystems • 215 Barcode.com • 218

Crichlow Data Sciences • 214

Data Vision • 214

Direct P.O.S. • 214

Metrologic Instruments • 54, 215,

218

NJCR Technologies • 54

Nurol Corp • 215

Opticon • 218

P.O.S. International • 214

PC America • 54

Percon • 54

Point of Sale Solutions • 215

PSC • 54, 215

Symbol Technologies • 54, 215,

218

Unitech Systems • 215

Welch Allyn • 214

Worthington Data Solutions

• 213

Desktop

Acer Peripherals • 226

Canon Computer Systems • 48

Epson • 139, 226, 237

Hewlett-Packard • 226, 237

Microtek Lab • 21, 226, 237

Thortek • 226

Umax Technologies • 220, 226,

237, 278, 288

Visioneer • 226, 237

Handheld

American Microsystems • 215

Data Vision • 214

Nurol Corp • 215

PC America • 54

Point of Sale Solutions • 215

Precise Biometrics • 21

PSC • 214

WizCom Technologies • 200 Worthington Data Solutions

• 213

Speakers/ Headphones

Altec Lansing Corp • 226, 297

Cambridge SoundWorks • 297

Creative Labs • 226

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278

Klipsch • 226

Labtec Enterprises • 220, 278,

288

MIDI Land • 297

Sonigistix • 226

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

Storage Devices

CD-ROM Drives

Acer Peripherals • 220, 278, 290,

297

A0pen • 291

ASUS Computer International
• 241, 294

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Creative Labs • 220, 226, 278,

290, 294

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 Kenwood • 220, 226, 238, 278,

Keliw

297

Micro Pro • 249

MicroSolutions • 278
Mitsumi Electronics Corp • 220,

224, 226, 241, 278, 290, 294

NEC Technologies • 220, 278

Pioneer New Media Technologies

• 220, 278 Plextor • 220, 226, 278, 290,

Piexu

297

Ricoh Corp • 226, 278 Sony Corp of America • 224, 294

TEAC America • 220, 226, 278

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

Toshiba America • 220, 224, 226,

238, 249, 278, 290, 294, 297

USDrives • 226

Yamaha • 241

CD-Recordable/ Rewritable Drives

Acer Peripherals • 220, 278,

290 Adaptec • 268

Addonics (Fora) • 226

CenDyne • 220, 226, 278

Creative Labs • 220, 278, 290,

294

297

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288

Hewlett-Packard • 220, 226, 233, 238, 242, 249, 278, 290, 294,

Mega Haus • 220

MicroSolutions • 220, 278

Mitsumi Electronics Corp • 224,

241, 294
Pacific Digital Products • 226

Panasonic • 233

Pine Technology • 268

Plextor • 220, 226, 238, 249, 278, 290, 297

Ricoh Corp • 220, 226, 242, 278, 288

Sony Corp of America • 220, 226,

233, 242, 278, 290, 294

TEAC America • 220, 226, 242,

278, 290

Thortek • 226
TigerDirect • 268

Toshiba America • 154, 226, 278,

288, 291, 294

Yamaha • 200, 220, 224, 226, 238, 241, 242, 278

Duplication Systems

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 Logicube • 217, 297

Mega Haus • 220

Prassi Software USA • 278
Rimage Corporation • 278

DVD-ROM Drives

Acer Peripherals • 278

Addonics (Fora) • 226 Afreey • 226, 233, 241

A0pen • 291

ASUS Computer International
• 226

INDEX

Storage Devices (continued)

Creative Labs • 220, 249, 278, 288, 290, 294, 297 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278

Hitachi • 297 Mega Haus • 220

Micro Pro • 249

Panasonic • 220, 278 Pioneer New Media Technologies

• 220, 226, 238, 278, 288

Ricoh Corp • 226, 233, 288 Samsung Electronics America

• 241

Shuttle Computer Group • 297

Sigma Designs • 297 Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

Toshiba America • 154, 220, 224, 226, 233, 278, 288, 291, 294, 297

Floppy Disk Drives

Apple Computer • 260 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 Mitsumi Electronics Corp • 241, 249, 290 Sony Corp of America • 226, 290 TEAC America • 220, 226, 236, 249, 278, 290 TigerDirect • 268

LS-120

Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Imation • 220, 238, 249, 278, 288, 297 Thortek • 226 TigerDirect • 268

Hard Drives

• 241

Apple Computer • 260 Conner Technology • 233 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 Fujitsu • 224, 233, 294 IBM Corporation • 220, 226, 242, 249, 278, 289, 290, 291, 294, 297 Maxtor Corp • 220, 224, 226, 233, 241, 242, 249, 268, 278, 289, 290, 291, 294, 297 Mega Haus • 220 MicroSolutions • 278 Quantum Corp • 13, 220, 224, 226, 233, 242, 278, 291, 297 Samsung Electronics America

Seagate Technology • 220, 224, 226, 233, 241, 242, 249, 268, 278, 289, 290, 291, 294, 297 Thortek • 226

Western Digital Corp • 220, 224, 238, 241, 242, 268, 278, 289, 290, 294, 297

9-Track Tape Drives

CPU • 216 Hewlett-Packard • 216 M4 Data • 216 Qualstar Corp • 216

Optical Storage

Delta Products Corp • 291 Maxoptix Corp • 278 Sony Corp of America • 220, 278

RAID Storage

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 **DPT** (Distributed Processing Technology) • 220, 226 Promise Technology • 220 Thortek • 226

Removable Storage Adamant Computers • 238

Castlewood Systems • 220, 226, 233, 278, 294, 297 Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 lomega Corp • 13, 152, 220, 224, 226, 233, 241, 242, 249, 278, 294, 297 Mega Haus • 220 Panasonic • 233

Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

Wetex International (USA) Corp

• 216

Tape Drives

Advanced Digital Recording • 278 CPU • 216 Exabyte Corp • 216, 220, 278 Fujitsu • 216 Hewlett-Packard • 216, 220, 226, Hewlett-Packard (Colorado) • 242 OnStream • 226 Qualstar Corp • 216 Quantum Corp • 216, 220, 226,

242, 278 Seagate Technology • 220, 226,

242, 249, 278, 290 Sony Corp of America • 220, 226, 242, 278

Tandberg Data • 216

Tecmar • 226

Thortek • 226

Video Conferencing

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 104

COMPONENTS

General Components

Cables/Connectors

Aberdeen LLC • 297 Computer Gate Int'l . 233 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 Mega Haus • 220 Thortek • 226

Chassis/Cases

Aberdeen LLC • 297 Addtronics • 226, 297 Antec • 226 Case Depot • 236 Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 Enlight Corp • 241, 249, 294 Ever Han Corp • 230 In Win Development • 154, 249, 294 Jinco Computers • 230

Mega Haus • 220 Micro Pro • 249

Super Micro • 249, 297

Team Force • 236

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

Thortek • 226

Wetex International (USA) Corp

CPU Cooling Fans

Aberdeen LLC • 297 Case Depot • 236

Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Mega Haus • 220 Team Force • 236

CPU Upgrades

TigerDirect • 268

Kingston Technology Corp • 2

CPUs

AMD (Advanced Micro Devices) • 154, 224, 226, 241, 242, 249, 268, 289, 290, 294 Cyrix • 242, 268 Intel Corp • 154, 224, 226, 241, 242, 249, 268, 289, 290, 294

Memory Upgrades

Aberdeen LLC • 297 Adamant Computers • 238 Apple Computer • 4, 252, 260 Compaq Computer Corp • 4, 260 Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Corsair Microsystems • 224, 289, 291, 294, 297 Crucial Technology (div of Micron) • 4, 262 Dell Computer Corp • 252 Gateway 2000 • 4

Hewlett-Packard • 4

IBM Corporation • 4, 260 Interpro Microsystems • 242

Kahlon • 260

KingMax Micro Technology • 297

McGlen Micro • 154

Memory 4 Less • 252 Memory Man • 289

Micro Pro • 249

Micron Electronics • 4

PC Progress • 294

Simple Technology • 21

Spartan Technologies • 224

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

Treasure Chest Peripherals • 291

Add-In Cards

Controller Cards

Aberdeen LLC • 297 Adaptec • 220, 226, 238, 278,

290, 297 Arco Computer Products • 278 Axis Communications • 278 Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 DPT (Distributed Processing Technology) • 220, 226, 278 Iwill (Quicktech) • 238 Mega Haus • 220 Mylex Corp • 297 Promise Technology • 220, 226,

SIIG • 297 Symbios Logic • 297 Tekram • 220, 278 Thortek • 226

278, 297

Graphics/ **Accelerator Cards**

3dfx Interactive (STB Systems) • 104, 224, 226, 238, 241, 242, 249, 278, 288, 290, 291, 294,

3Dlabs • 242, 297

ASUS Computer International • 154, 224, 226, 238, 241, 242,

291, 294, 297 ATI Technologies • 104, 224, 226,

238, 241, 242, 249, 278, 290, 291, 294, 297

Creative Labs • 226, 290, 294

Diamond Multimedia Systems • 104, 224, 226, 238, 241, 242,

278, 290, 294, 297 ELSA • 226, 242, 290, 297

Giga-Byte • 154

Guillemot • 249, 297

Hercules Computer Technology

• 297

Jaton Corp • 297

Leadtek USA • 297

Matrox Electronic Systems Ltd

• 224, 226, 238, 241, 242, 290, 294, 297

Nvidia Corp • 103

Pine Technology • 297 Sigma Designs • 278

SIS • 249

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

TigerDirect • 268

Trident Microsystems • 241 VisionTek • 290

Memory Cards

Acer America Corp • 289
AST Research • 260
Compaq Computer Corp • 252,
260, 289

CTX International • 260
Dell Computer Corp • 260, 289
Gateway 2000 • 260

Hewlett-Packard • 260 IBM Corporation • 252, 260, 289

Kahlon • 260 Marine Park Computers • 152 Memory 4 Less • 252

NEC Computer Systems • 289

SanDisk Corp • 290 Sharp Electronics Corp • 289

Memory Man • 289

Simple Technology • 21 Sony Corp of America • 289

Thortek • 226
Toshiba America • 252, 260, 289

Sound Cards

Creative Labs • 220, 224, 226, 238, 241, 249, 278, 290, 291, 294, 297

Diamond Multimedia Systems
• 226, 238, 241, 290, 291,

297

Keycom Enterprises • 238

Pine Technology • 297 Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

Turtle Beach Systems • 226, 238

Yamaha • 241

Video Controllers & Equipment

3dfx Interactive (STB Systems)
• 288

ATI Technologies • 224, 226, 238, 241, 242, 249, 290, 294, 207

Diamond Multimedia Systems

• 241, 242

Mega Haus • 220

Sigma Designs • 220, 278

Wavelink Media • 278

Motherboards

ABIT Computer Corp • 154, 224, 226, 231, 233, 238, 242, 290, 291, 294, 297

AOpen • 233
ASUS Computer International

• 154, 224, 226, 231, 233, 238, 241, 242, 249, 290, 291, 294, 297

BCM Advanced Research • 241

Biostar • 241

DFI • 238, 291

Diamond Multimedia Systems

• 268

ECS • 249, 268

Epox • 231, 297

FIC (First Int'l Computer) • 224, 226, 231, 233, 241, 242, 249, 268, 290, 291, 294, 297

Giga-Byte • 154, 231, 233, 238, 242, 249, 268, 290, 294

Intel Corp • 224, 231, 242, 249,

278, 294, 297

Iwill (Quicktech) • 242

Kahlon • 260 Luckytech Technology Co. • 268

Microstar Laboratories • 224, 233, 242, 268, 294, 297

MSI • 268, 291

Pine Technology • 268, 297

Shuttle Computer Group • 231, 241, 297

Soyo Computer • 268, 291

Super Micro • 231, 233, 242,

249, 297 Tekram • 241

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241 Thortek • 226

TigerDirect • 268

291, 294, 297

Tyan Computer Corp • 224, 226, 231, 233, 238, 242, 249, 290,

PC Card Equipment

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 152, 154 Addonics (Fora) • 152, 226

Belkin Components • 226

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 Hewlett-Packard • 290

Kahlon • 260

Marine Park Computers • 152

Mega Haus • 220

Thortek • 226

Xircom • 152

• Misc. Components

Aberdeen LLC • 297 American Microsystems • 215

Apple Computer • 260

Case Depot • 236

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288

Ever Han Corp • 230

IBM Corporation • 260 lomega Corp • 278

Jinco Computers • 230

Kahlon • 260

Mega Haus • 220

Team Force • 236

Thortek • 226

Wetex International (USA) Corp

• 216

ACCESSORIES

• Electrical Accessories

Batteries

Acer America Corp • 289

Compaq Computer Corp • 260, 289
Dell Computer Corp • 289

IBM Corporation • 260, 289

Kahlon • 260

Marine Park Computers • 152 Memory Man • 289

NEC Computer Systems • 289

Sharp Electronics Corp • 289

Sony Corp of America • 289

Texas Instruments (Acer) • 260 Toshiba America • 260, 289

Power Strips/ Surge Suppressors

Computer Gate Int'l • 233 Kensington Microware Ltd • 268

Switch Boxes

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Uninterruptible Power Supplies

American Power Conversion Corp • 21, 237, 297 Archtek • 297

• Disk Accessories

Computer Gate Int'l • 233

Computer Gate Int'l • 233
Dirt Cheap Drives • 278
Mega Haus • 220
Pioneer New Media Technologies
• 278

Thortek • 226

Notebook/ Portable Accessories

Carrying Cases

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 Thortek • 226

Notebook/ Laptop Hard Drives

AST Research • 260
Compaq Computer Corp • 252, 260
CTX International • 252
Dell Computer Corp • 260

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 Gateway 2000 • 260

Hitachi • 220, 278

IBM Corporation • 220, 224, 226, 260, 278

Kahlon • 260

Marine Park Computers • 152

Memory 4 Less • 252 MicroSolutions • 220

Sharp Electronics Corp • 252

Simple Technology • 21
Texas Instruments (Acer) • 260

Thortek • 226 Toshiba America • 220, 224, 226,

252, 260, 278, 294

Portable CD-ROM Drives

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278
Kahlon • 260
MicroSolutions • 152, 220

Portable CD-Recordable Drives

Archos • 152

Hewlett-Packard • 152 lomega Corp • 152

MicroSolutions • 220

Portable DVD-ROM Drives

Addonics (Fora) • 152

Portable MP3 Music Players

Diamond Multimedia Systems

• 21, 291

Misc. Notebook/ Portable Accessories

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278
Marine Park Computers • 152
Mega Haus • 220
Thortek • 226

Printer Supplies

Printer Expansion Memory

Hewlett-Packard • 252, 260 IBM Corporation • 260

Kahlon • 260

Lexmark International • 260 Memory 4 Less • 252

Toner/Inkjet Cartridges

Epson • 237

Nurol Corp • 215

Panasonic • 252

Misc. Printer Supplies

Storage Media

CD-R (Recordable) Discs

Computer Gate Int'l • 233



Dirt Cheap Drives • 278 lomega Corp • 233 Mega Haus • 220 Thortek • 226 TigerDirect • 268

Data Cartridges/Cassettes

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278

Hewlett-Packard • 278

lomega Corp • 278

Mega Haus • 220

Seagate Technology • 249, 278

Sony Corp of America • 21, 278

Floppy Disks

TigerDirect • 268

Optical Disks

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278

Maxoptix Corp • 278

Mega Haus • 220

Sony Corp of America • 220,

278

Zip Disks

lomega Corp • 220, 226, 249, 278, 297 Thortek • 226 TigerDirect • 268

• Test Equipment

Mega Haus • 220

Misc.Accessories

Case Depot • 236
Computer Gate Int'l • 233
Dirt Cheap Drives • 278
Ever Han Corp • 230
Jinco Computers • 230
Mega Haus • 220
Team Force • 236
Thortek • 226

NETWORKING/ COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

3Com Corp/US Robotics • 48, 104, 152, 154, 238, 241, 249,

278, 294, 297 Allion • 278 Archtek • 297 Arlotto Technologies •

Arlotto Technologies • 233 Axis Communications • 278 Bay Networks • 21

Belkin Components • 226 Cisco Systems • 48

Computer Gate Int'l • 233 D-Link Systems • 233, 238, 249

Dirt Cheap Drives • 278, 288 Edimax Technology Co • 294

Extreme Networks • 291
Hewlett-Packard • 48

Intel Corp • 233, 238, 241, 249, 294, 297

Marine Park Computers

• 152 Mega Haus • 220

Micro Pro • 249 Orange Micro • 278

Phoebe • 249

Thompson Computer Warehouse

• 241

TigerDirect • 268 Xircom • 152

SOFTWARE & CONTENT

Applications Software

Accounting/Finance/ Tax/Investment

Cougar Mountain Software
• 3

Crichlow Data Sciences • 214 Intuit • 48, 217

Nurol Corp • 215

Nurol Corp • 215
P.O.S. International • 214

Communications

Symantec Corp • 169, 217 Symantec Corp (Delrina Group) • 169, 217

Database

Management
Microsoft Corp • 217

Desktop Publishing

Adobe Systems • 169, 217

Education/ Training

SmartCertifty Direct • 243

Fonts

Nurol Corp • 215
Worthington Data Solutions
• 213

Graphics

Adobe Systems • 48, 169, 217 Corel Corp • 217 Visio Corp • 217

Integrated

Corel Corp • 169, 217

Lotus Development Corp • 21,
217

Microsoft Corp • 169, 217, 294

Internet

Adobe Systems • 169

Languages/Tools

Inprise Corp (Borland) • 169 Microsoft Corp • 217

Multimedia

Macromedia • 48

Networking

Microsoft Corp • 169, 217 NovaStor Corp • 220, 278 Novell • 220 Seagate Software • 220

PIMs

Symantec Corp • 169, 217

Point-of-Sale

American Microsystems • 215
Barcode.com • 218
Cougar Mountain Software • 3
Crichlow Data Sciences • 214
DCRS Solutions • 215
Direct P.O.S. • 214

ICV Corp • 215, 218

Merchant Software Corp

• 215

microbiz.com • 218

Northwest Network Solutions

• 215

Nurol Corp • 215 P.O.S. International • 214 PC America • 54

Point of Sale Solutions • 215 RegistWare • 214

Remsoft Technologies • 215

Sales Management Systems

• 214, 215 Software Store Products • 215 StrandWare • 215

Worthington Data Solutions
• 213

Project Management

Microsoft Corp • 217

Microsoft Corp ● 217

Security

Network Associates (McAfee)
• 217
NovaStor Corp • 220

Spreadsheets

Lotus Development Corp • 217

Utilities

Adaptec • 220, 278
Creative Digital Research • 220, 278
Dirt Cheap Drives • 278
Elektroson USA • 278
Mega Haus • 220

Microsoft Corp • 13
Network Associates (McAfee)
• 217

NovaStor Corp • 220, 278 Ontrack Computer Systems • 220, 278

Prassi Software USA • 278

Seagate Software • 200, 220, 278

SmartCertify Direct • 243 Symantec Corp • 48, 169, 217

Voice Recognition

Symantec Corp • 217

Word Processing

Corel Corp • 217 Microsoft Corp • 217

Operating Systems/GUIs

Microsoft Corp • 48, 169, 217, 294

Books/ Catalogs/ Videos

microbiz.com • 218
PC Mall • 48
TigerDirect • 84
Worthington Data Solutions • 213

SERVICES

Data Conversion/ Disk Duplication

Logicube • 217

Training/ Business

Crichlow Data Sciences • 214
Gateway 2000 • 57
P.O.S. International • 214
PC America • 54
SmartCertify Direct • 243

Web Hosting

Dell Computer Corp • 65 Gateway 2000 • 57

Misc. Services

Egghead.Com • 178
P.O.S. International • 214
Safeware • 35

Maxtor Hard Drive 10.2GB 🗬 THD-10M

Seagate Hard Drive 15.3GB 🤽 THD-15A

Seagate Hard Drive 20.5GB S THD-20A

 Capacity
 Seek Time
 Trans. Rate
 RPM
 Buffer
 Wty

 20.5GB
 9.5ms
 66.6MB/s
 5400
 512KB
 3vrs

Western Hard Drive THD-30B

Capacity Seek Time Trans. Rate RPM Buffer Wty

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 Capacity
 Seek Time
 Trans. Rate
 RPM
 Buffer
 Wty

 15.3GB
 9.5ms
 66.6MB/s
 5400
 512KB
 3yrs

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w/Athlon 850CPU

Slot 1 & Socket 370 Motherboard Comparison PINE

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Motherboard	Supported Bus Speed	Chipset	370 Socket	Slot 1 Socket	Max. CPU Supported	Max. Memory	UDMA 33/66	AGP/PCI/ISA Slots	On-board LAN/Modem	On-board Audio/Video	Item #	Qty 1-2 Price
Soyo MB2-6KBE	66	Intel LX	No	Yes	400 Celeron/PII 333	512	33	1/4/3	No/ No	No/ No	MB2-6KBE	\$49.99
EDOM W6BXV	66/100	Apollo Pro Plus	No	Yes	600 Celeron/PII 450	768	33	1/4/3	No/ No	No/ No	MB2-W6BXV	\$49.99
Diamond C400	66/100	Intel BX	No	Yes	700PIII/600 Celeron	768	33	1/5/2	No/No	No/No	D55-C400	\$49.99
Soyo SY-7SSB	66/100	SiS 600	Yes	No	600 Celeron	768	33	1/3/2	No/No	No/ No	S450-1065	\$59.99
PC Chips M726LMRT	66/100	BXcel	Yes	Yes	700PIII/600 Celeron	768	33	1/3/1	Opt./Opt.	Yes/No	D75-726MRT	\$59.99
Pine SB1-A	66/100	SiS 5600	No	Yes	700PIII/600 Celeron	768	33	0/3/2	No/No	Yes/No	P450-2000	\$69.99
ECS P6BAP-A+	66/100/133	VT82C693A	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	768	66	1/4/2	No/ No	Yes/ No	MB2-P6BAP	\$69.99
Pine SB3-AV	66/100	SiS620	Yes	No	600 Celeron	768	66	0/3/2	No/ No	Yes/Yes	P450-1025	\$79.99
Pine PM-F01A	66/100	Intel BX	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	768	33	1/5/2	No/ No	No/No	P450-1005	\$82.99
Pine SM3-AV	66/100	SiS 620	Yes	No	700PIII/600 Celeron	768	66	0/3/1	No/ No	Yes/Yes	P450-1030	\$84.99
ECS P6STP-FL	66/100/133	SiS 630E	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	1024	66	1/2/0	Opt./ Opt.	Yes/Yes	MB2-P6STPFL	\$84.99
Luckytech P694A	66/100/133	Apollo Pro 133	Yes	Yes	800PIII/600 Celeron	768	66	1/4/1	No/ No	Yes/ No	L451-1000	\$86.99
Pine BA-1	66/100	Intel BX	No	Yes	700PIII/600 Celeron	768	33	1/4/3	No/ No	No/No	P450-3000	\$89.99
FIC FA-13	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	933PIII/600 Celeron	1024	66	1/5/2	No/ No	Yes/No	L450-1060	\$89.99
SoyoSY-6VBA 133	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	No	Yes	800PIII/600 Celeron	1024	66	1/5/2	No/ No	No/No	S450-1010	\$92.99
Gigabyte GA-6VXE7+	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	768	66	1/5/2	No/ No	No/ No	L450-4021	\$94.99
Soyo SY-7VBA 133	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	768	66	1/5/2	No/ No	Yes/ No	S450-1060	\$99.99
FIC FB-11	66/100	Intel BX	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	1024	33	1/5/2	No/ No	No/ No	L450-1050	\$101.99
FIC FA-11	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	933PIII/600 Celeron	1536	66	1/5/1	No/ No	Yes/No	L450-1055	\$107.99
Gigabyte GA-6VX7-4X	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	1536	66	1/5/1	No/ No	Yes/ No	L450-4022	\$109.99
Soyo SY-7VCM	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	1024	66	1/3/0	No/ No	Yes/No	S450-1055	\$114.99
Soyo SY-6VCA	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	No	Yes	800PIII/600 Celeron	1536	66	1/5/1	No/ No	Yes/No	S450-1011	\$116.99
Soyo SY-7VCA-133	66/100/133	Via Apollo 133	Yes	No	800PIII/600 Celeron	1536	66	1/5/1	No/ No	Yes/ No	S450-1050	\$119.99
Pine BA-1D	66/100	Intel BX	No	Dual	700PIII/600 Celeron	1024	33	1/5/2	No/ No	No/No	P450-4000	\$169.99

Socket 7 Motherboard Comparison







Motherboard	Chipset Bus Speed	Supported 33/66	UDMA	Cache Supported	Max. CPU SIMM/DIMM	Memory Slots	AGP/PCI/ISA LAN/Modem	On-board Audio/Video	On-board	Item # Price	QTY 1-2
Diamond C200	Aladdin V	66/75/83/95/100	33	512KB Cache	500MHz	0/768	1/4/3	No/No	No/No	D55-C200	\$49.99
Soyo 5EMA+	ETEQ 6629	66/75/83/90/95/100	33	1MB Cache	550MHz	0/768	1/5/2	No/No	No	S450-1035	\$64.99
PC Chips M-571LMR	TX Pro II	60/66/75	33	512KB Cache	366MHz	0/512	0/3/2	Opt/Opt	Opt/Opt	MB2-571LMR	\$69.99
Soyo SY-5EH/5	ETEQ 6639	66/75/83/95/100	33	512KB Cache	550MHz	0/768	1/3/3	No/No	No/No	S450-1045	\$77.99
FIC VA-503+	Via MVP3	66/75/83/95/100	33	1MB Cache	550MHz	512/512	1/3/3	No/No	No	L450-1000	\$79.99
PC Chips M-598LMR	SiS 530	66/75/83/95/100	33	1MB Cache	550MHz	0/768	0/2/1	Opt/Opt	Yes/AGP	MB2-598LMR	\$82.99
PC Chips MS-599LMR	SiS 530	66/75/83/95/100	33	1MB Cache	550MHz	0/768	0/2/1	Opt/Opt	Yes/AGP	MB2-599LMR	\$82.99
Gigabyte GA-5AA	Aladdin V	66/75/83/95/100	66	512KB Cache	550MHz	0/768	1/3/2	No/No	No/No	L450-4000	\$84.99
Gigabyte GA-5AX	Aladdin V	66/75/83/95/100	66	512KB Cache	550MHz	0/768	1/5/2	No/No	No/No	L450-4010	\$85.99
Soyo SY-5SSM-5	SiS530	66/75/83/95/100	66	512KB Cache	550MHz	0/768	0/4/1	No/No	Yes/AGP	S450-1040	\$88.99
EIC VAZ AV	Via MV/PA	66/75/83/95/100/12/	66	512KB Cache	550MHz	0/768	0/5/2	No/No	Ves/AGP	P450-5000	\$89.99

Socket A & Slot A Motherboard Comparison













ı	Motherboard	Chipset Bus Speed	Supported	Socket A	Slot A	Duron Support	Ultra ATA/66 Support	Max. CPU Supported	Max. Memory DIMM	AGP/PCI/ISA Slots	On-board LAN/Modem	On-board Audio/Video	Item #	QTY 1-2 Price
	Luckytech P6K7A	Via KX-133	200	No	Yes	No	Yes	1GHz	768	1/5/1	No/No	Yes/No	L451-2000	\$99.99
	Gigabyte GA-7IXE	AMD 751	200	No	Yes	No	Yes	1GHz	768	1/5/2	No/No	No/No	L450-4040	\$104.99
	Soyo SY-K7VIA	Via KX-133	200	No	Yes	No	Yes	1GHz	768	1/5/1	No/No	No/No	S450-2000	\$112.99
	Microstar K7-Pro	AMD 751	200	No	Yes	No	Yes	1GHz	768	1/6/1	No/No	No/No	MB2-K7PR0	\$115.99
	PC Chips M-800LMR	AMD 751	200	No	Yes	No	Yes	1GHz	768	1/4/0	Yes/Opt.	Yes/No	MB2-M800LMR	\$119.99
	FIC AZ11	Via KT-133	200	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	1GHz	1536	1/5/0	No/No	Yes/No	L450-1040	\$142.99
	Gigabyte GA-7ZX	Via KT-133	200	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	1GHz	1536	1/5/0	No/No	Yes/No	MB2-7ZX	\$146.99

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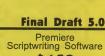
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18.4GB	2MB	7200	ST318436LC	\$299
18.4GB	4MB	7200	ST318436LCV	\$319
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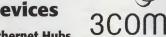
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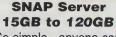
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4 of 10



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Your CD's will look professional quality with this color CD printer. Prints on printable CD's. Compatible with PC or Macintosh systems. (CDPRINTER3)

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New CDR-W for 1394 & USB Teac 4x4x6 USB #CDW54EUSB \$239

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Burn a write-once only CD for ultimate data security and archival storage.



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CD Drive controllers

Add A Controller — If Needed For a complete listing ADAPTEC RAID, See Page 8 A1505CDKIT ISA 16 Bit SCSI (no hard drive support \$49 \$54 A2906EKIT PCI 32 Bit SCSI (For PC or Mac) T1350 EPP Parallel to SCSI adapte \$69 PCMCIA type 2, 3, or 4 to SCSI CardBus to Ultra SCSI \$125 \$169 T1460D2KIT T1480A A2940UKIT PCI 32 bit Ultra SCSI controller \$229 32 Bit PCI SCSI controller - no bios \$23 DC315U DC39511 32 Rit PCI tiltra SCSI controller \$45 32 Bit PCI Ultra Wide SCSI controller \$72 DC390 32 Bit PCI Ultra-2 SCSI controller DC390U2 \$117 DC390U2W DC390U3W PROMISE 32 Bit PCI Ultra-2 SCSI Dual Channel controller \$143 1 Ultra 160 Channel & 1 Ultra Wide channel kit ULTRA66 PCI, Supports Ultra-66 IDE drives \$29 PCI, Supports Ultra ATA-66 IDE drives
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> **Page** 5 of 10







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12x	5 pack (CDR74-5)	\$6
12x	20 pack (CDR74-20)	\$24
12x	50 pack (CDR74-50)	\$56
12x	100 pack (CDR74-100)	\$105
12x	Platinum 5 pack (CDR74PA-5)	\$6
12x	Platinum 20 pack (CDR74PA-20)	\$24
12x	Platinum 50 pack (CDR74PA-50)	\$57
12x	Platinum 100 pack (CDR74PA-100)	\$106
Print	table CDR-74 in jewel case	
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12x	Budget 20 pack (CDR74PB-20)	\$15
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12x	5 pack (CDR74P-5)	\$7
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	No jewel cases included (CDR74S8-50)	\$42
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	No jewel cases included (CDR74S8-100)	\$79
Bulk!	Spindle 80 minute media. Includes 100 CD-Rs (12x),	
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Bulk!	(, , ,	
	No jewel cases included (CDR80S8-500)	\$199

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CDR-74W in jewel case

Dorles	Inquiries invited Nobody heats Dir	Charm Driver for
4x	100 pack (CDR74W-100)	WOW !!! \$199
4x	50 pack (CDR74W-50)	\$107
4x	20 pack (CDR74W-20)	\$45
4x	5 pack (CDR74W-5)	\$12
4x	Budget 100 pack (CDR74WB-100)	\$104
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Professional Series Earphone

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New comfort & fit design provides optimal voice clarity for voice command, internet communications, multi-player gaming and other multimedia applications. \$20



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(!) PIONEER

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- \$145 DVD Recorder, DVD-R write 1x, DVD-R read 2x, 4MB buffer, Inc. write, DVD software + 3 DVD disks (DVRS201) \$3879

Dirt Cheap Drive Kit

- 16X kit complete with MPEG-2 decoder
- 16X DVD reader, 95ms 40X CD ROM, 80ms • IDE interface • Supports CDR and CD-RW media

Complete Kit (DVD16KIT)

Creative DVD Kit

- Encore DVD 12X kit includes: 130ms 12X DVD drive
- · Reads CDs at 40X, 110ms
- · MPEG-2 decoder
- · DVD Titles (CLDVD12KIT)

\$229

\$115

\$149

SALE!

- · 12X DVD reader, 90ms · 40X CD ROM, 80ms Bare IDE Drive (SDM1402)
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Ricoh

• 6X, 4X Rewrite CD-RW, 4X DVD Read, 24X CD Read Complete Drive Kit (MP9060A) \$259

FISC-CD (Ethernet IDE CD Controller)

Connect up to 8 IDE CD ROMS (in increments of 2) directly to your Ethernet network without a computer. Auto switches between Ethernet and Fast Ethernet connection. Features 8MB RAM buffer, user upgradable to 72MB through SIMM sockets. FISC CD offers the most complete proto-



col support in the industry: Windows NT, Netware, Unix, Web server, and Macintosh. This controller is internet ready with built-in WWW server function. Mounts in a 5.25"HH drive bay. (RISC-CD) \$665

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Pre-assembled 8 drive tower. Uses FISC-CD controller listed above. 40X Drive tower (MIT40X8N) \$1189 48X Drive tower (MIT48X8N) \$1219



We have every kind of tower configuration you can imagine. Call us for a quote.

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DVD-RAM Drives Stores 5.2GB!

Creative DVD RAM Kit (CLDVDRAM) only \$269

Toshiba DVD utility software PC or Moc only \$59

- DVD-RAM 1X, 120ms DVD-ROM 2x, 210 ms
- CD-ROM 16x, 140ms 2MB buffer
- Reads DVD-ROM, DVD-R, DVD-Video, Video CD, CD-ROM, CED-Audio, CD-R, and CD-RW disks.

Bare SCSI drive (SDW1111) \$409 Hitachi

 DVD-RAM 1x, 210ms
 DVD-ROM 2x, 165ms • 2MB buffer CD-ROM 24x, 140ms

DVD utility software for PC (DVDSFTPC-NT) for Mac (DVDSFTMAC)

· Reads DVD-ROM, DVD-R, CD-RW, and PD disks. SCSI bare drive (GF-2050)

\$555 DVD RAM MEDIA 5.2 media (DVDRAMDISK) 1-4/5-9/10+ \$37/\$35/\$33

We really appreciate your business!

DVD Accessories

SIGMA DESIGNS HOLLYWOOD

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towers & Network

Ethernet CD ROM Towers - Can be used simultaneously from Win 95, NT, OS/2, a UNIX platforms using Novell Netware, Microsoft Networks a NFS

	7 Drive	7 Drive	13 Drive	13 Drive
	10baseT	10/100	10baseT	10/100
Toshiba 40X	\$1195	\$1309	\$2059	\$2359
	#TOS6401X7N	#TOS6401X7NT	#TOS6401X13T	#TOS6401X13E
Plextor 40X	\$1305	\$1419	\$2259	\$2565
	#PLEX40X7N	#PLEX40X7NT	#PLEX40X13T	#PLEX40X13E
NEC 40X	\$1125	\$1239	\$1925	\$2225
	#NEC3010X7N	#NEC3010X7NT	NEC3010X13T	#NEC3010X13E
Kenwood 52X	\$1739	\$1845	\$3049	\$3355
	#KEN415X7N	#KEN415X7NT	#KEN415X13T	#KEN415X13E

Ethernet SCSI **Axis StorePoint CD** CD Controller

Connect your SCSI CD ROM drives directly to your Ethernet or Token Ring network without a computer. Stand alone has its own external enclosure. Tower module mounts in a

fomet case	& occupies 1 3.23	uu ntika	s way.	
Enclosure	Network Ma:	x # Drives	Item #	Price
Stand-alone	Ethernet	7	AXISCD-E	\$525
Stand-alone	TokenRing	7	AXISCD-TR	\$545
Tower Module	Token Ring	7	AXISCD/T-TR	\$555
Tower Module	Ethernet	7	AXISCDE100	\$585
Tower Module	Ethernet	14	AXISCDE100D	\$655
Tower Module	Ethernet or Fast ethernet	7	AXISCD/DVD	\$765
Tower Module	Ethernet or Fast ethernet	14	AXISCD/DVDD	\$955

SCSI CD ROM DRIVE

Speed	Brand	Model	ms	Buffer	Int	Ext	
32X	TEAC	CD532S	85	128K	\$75	\$165	
32X	PLEXTOR	PX32CS (CADDY)	85	512K	\$140	\$230	
40X	NEC	CDR3010	85	256K	\$72	\$162	
40X	TOSHIBA	XM6401B	85	256K	\$82	\$172	
40X	PLEXTOR	PX40TS (TRAY)	85	512K	\$93	\$183	
52X	KENWOOD	UCR415	90	2MB	\$149	\$239	
WIDE	WIDE SCSI CD ROM						
40X	Plextor	PX40TSUW	85	512K	\$99	\$189	
Pioneer 24x 6 Disk external CD changer (DRM6324X) \$39						\$395	

Universal sound cable (AUDIOMIX) \$5 • CD Driver software, for Mac (RAPIDPD) \$8 CD Caddies (CDCADDY) 5-19 \$5 20+ \$4

ide ed rom drive

Speed	Brand	Model	ms	Buffer	Drive
40X	Teac	CD540E	85	128K	\$49
40X	NEC	CDR3000	75	128K	\$49
48X	Toshiba	XM6702B	85	256K	\$53
48X	Mitsumi	CRMCFX48X	65	256K	\$47
50X	Acer	CD650P	85	128k	\$47
52X	Creative	SBCD52	100	256k	\$47
52X	Kenwood	UCR412	90	2MB	\$82
72X	Kenwood	UCR421	100	2MB	\$112

Also available in rack mount - perfect for libraries.

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Buy a CD drive & sound card & get a FREE audio cable. Sound Blaster Live MP3+ (SBLIVEMP3+) Sound Blaster Live X-Gamer (SBX-GAMER) \$89 Sound Blaster 512 (SBPCI512) \$65 Platinum (SBPLATINUM) \$179 IDE CD ROM case with card and cable (HOTPORT) \$129 IDE CD ROM case for parallel printer port (PPCASECD) \$59

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Plextor	40X	85ms	\$439 #PLEX40X4B	\$779 #PLEX40X7B
Plextor Plextor 40X Now	40X available in U	85ms Iltra Wide SCSI	\$519 !#PLEX40WX4B	\$899 #PLEX40WX7B
NEC	40X	85ms	\$369 #NEC3010X4B	\$649 #NEC3010X7B
Kenwood	52X	85ms	\$729	\$1279

#KEN415X4B

#KEN415X7B

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SONY Master CD with this complete kit. Includes mastering software **SONY** and drive in high quality external USB case.



100MB Zip Drive

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250MB Zip

Iomega USB 250MB Zip drive. Easy to install, simply connect to the USB port on your system and install the included software.



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USB to SCSI adapter by Adaptec. Allows you to attach any SCSI device to the USB port. Also available in SCSI-2.

#USBSCSI \$69 #USBSCSI2 \$69



SuperDisk Drive 120MB & Floppy

Imation LS-120 USB drive for iMac & Blue G3 systems. Reads Mac & PC formats. Uses 1.4MB and 120MB disks.

#USBLS120



1394 USB/PCI BOARD

2 1394 ports & 2 USB external ports for plug and play peripherals. #70HTL00060



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Teac USB floppy for iMac. Reads & writes Mac and PC formats. Features iMac blue case.

#USBFLOPPY \$85



10GB, 15GB, 20GB, 30GB Hard Drive

10GB USB external hard drive with built-in fan and USB cable. Cool looking translucent white plastic casing.

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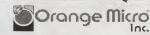
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1394/FIREWIRE

Hot 1394 products by



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1394 PCMCIA CARDBUS

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1394 CardBus PC Card

(70HTL00040)



1394 USB/PCI BOARD

2 1394 & 2 USB external ports for plug and play peripherals.

USB/PCI Board

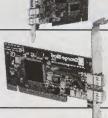
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1394 PCI BOARD KIT

Edit video from your Mac or PC!

Mac/PC PCI Board Kit:

\$89



1394 Hub

Disconnect 1394 peripherals without disturbing other peripherals in a traditional daisy chaln. Provides 5 additional 1394 ports from a single power supply.

1394 Hub



1394 REPEATER AND CABLES

Connect one repeater to another using 15 foot cables. Reach up to 236 feet total length from the original 1394 host system.

(70HTL00020) \$45 1394 Repeater (70CAB13943) 15 Ft. Cable: 6pin to 4pin \$28 15 Ft. Cable: 6pin to 6pin (70CAB13942)



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1394 UMAX PowerLook 1100 Scanner with DuoDesign Software Bundle



(SPKG14006)

\$959

Designed for use on Macintosh or Windows PC systems equipped with a FireWire/IEEE-1394 port. The PowerLook 1100 features a high 3.4Dmax for fine details, 4MB I/O buffer, 1200 x 2400 dpi with a 10,600 element tri-linear CCD, and an effective 42-bit output.

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10 - 2000 **Computer Shopper**

> **Page** 8 of 10



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Models available with redundant hot swap power supplies.



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Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (3.5CASE160)	\$69
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PCMCIA/IDE closed & 1" open face (PCMCIA3.5)	\$119
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Ultra (HHCASET)	\$59
Ultra Wide SCSI (HHCASETW)	\$89
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (HHCASET160)	\$99
Parallel/IDE closed & open face (PPCASECD)	\$89
PCMCIA/IDE open&closed face (PCMCIACD)	\$129
Two Drive Case - Holds 2 half height or 1 full height drive	
Ultra (FHCASE)	\$89
Ultra Wide SCSI (FHCASEW)	\$129
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (FHCASE160)	\$139
Dual 3.5" drive model	
Ultra (DUAL3.5CASE)	\$89
Ultra Wide SCSI (DUAL3.5CW)	\$109
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (DUAL3.5C160)	\$129
Four Drive Case - Holds 4 half height or 2 full height drive	es.
Ultra (DUALCASET)	\$109
Ultra Wide SCSI (DUALCASETW)	\$129
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2)(DUALCASE160)	\$139
Eight Drive Case - Holds 8 half height or 4 full height driv	es.
Ultra (TOWERCASET)	\$189
Ultra Wide SCSI (TOWERCASETW)	\$209
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (TOWERCSE160)	\$229
Fourteen Drive Case - Holds 14 half height or 6 full heigh	nt drives.
Ultra (14BAYCASE)	\$419
Ultra Wide SCSI (14BAYCASEFW)	\$439
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (14BAYCSE160)	\$449
Eighteen Drive Case - Holds 18 half height or 8 full heigh	
Ultra (18BAYCASE)	\$599
Ultra Wide SCSI (18BAYCASEFW)	\$619
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2)(18BAYCSE160)	\$639
Twenty Drive Case - Holds 20 half height or 10 full height	drives.
Ultra (20BAYCASE)	\$679
Ultra Wide SCSI (20BAYCASEFW)	\$699
Ultra 160 SCSI (comp w/ U-2) (20BAYCSE160)	\$719
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Hot Port External

The perfect way to turn any IDE drive into an external. Great for Hard drives, CD ROM, CD-R, CD-

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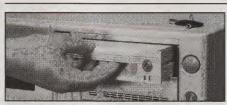
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High quality construction. Gold plated connections. Features 2 built in cooling fans (one front, one rear), SCSI ID switch. Metal frame and metal cartridge construction. LCD display shows time, drive temperature, SCSI ID, and voltage.

temperature, SCSI ID, and voltage.

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> Page 9 of 10







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10 - 2000 **Computer Shopper**

> **Page** 10 of 10

INDEX

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A Matter of Fax Inc	.237
Aberdeen297 -	299
ABS Computer Technologies16	ò, 17
Adamant Computers238,	239
Adtech Systems, Inc	.216
AMD82	2, 83
American Microsystems	.215
American STI, dba: Syscon	.121
ANCHORHARBOR.com	.277
Atlas Micro74, 75	5, 90
AV Marketplace	
AvantGarde.com	.256
Axis Systems42, 43	3, 92
barcode.com	.218
BigClearance.com	.169
buy.com	13
Caliber Computer Corporation	.163
Case Depot	.236
CDW Computer Centers, Inc21	- 26
Comp Direct	.219
Compaq Computer Corporation	30,
31, 79, 156 - 159	
Compaq Factory Outlet	.255
Comp-U-Plus	.290
Computer Gate International233 -	235

Computers4SURE.com200
Cougar Mountain Software3
CPU216
Crichlow Data Sciences214
Crucial Technology4, 5, 262
Cumetrix Data Systems88
Cyberpower, Inc60, 61, 87
Data Vision214
Dell Computer CorpCOV2 - COV4,
1, 6, 65 - 71, 134, 135, 146, 147, 176,
177, 187 - 190, 202 - 204
Dell Factory Outlet247
Direct POS214
Dirt Cheap Drives278 - 288
Egghead.com178
Ever Han Corp230
Fujitsu PC Corporation115, 117
Gateway 200045 - 47, 55 - 58,
85, 112, 113
Harmony Computer138
Hewlett Packard89, 123, 125,
127, 300, C5, C6
HotDeals4Less.com212
Hyundai129
IBM Corporation8, 10, 11

iBUYPOWER	95
liyama	15
Interpro	242
Jinco Computer	230
Kahlon, Inc	260
Kingston Technology	2
Logicube, Inc	217
Marine Park Computer	s152, 153
McGlen.com	154
Megahaus104	1 , 105, 220 - 223
Memory 4 Less	252
Memory Man	289
microbiz.com	218
IIIICI ODIZ.COIII	210
Micro Pro	
	50, 249 - 251
Micro Pro	50, 249 - 251
Micro Pro Micron Computer	50, 249 - 251 99 als86
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Periphera	50, 249 - 251 99 als86
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Periphera Motherboard Express	50, 249 - 251 99 als86 231
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Peripher. Motherboard Express Nurol Corporation	50, 249 - 251 99 als86 231 215
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Peripher. Motherboard Express Nurol Corporation Nutrend	50, 249 - 25199 als8623121591
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Peripher. Motherboard Express Nurol Corporation Nutrend Nvidia	50, 249 - 25199 als8623121591214
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Peripher. Motherboard Express Nurol Corporation Nutrend Nvidia P.O.S. International	50, 249 - 25199 als8623121591303
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Peripher. Motherboard Express Nurol Corporation Nutrend Nvidia P.O.S. International PC America	50, 249 - 25199 als86231215913032145448, 49
Micro Pro Micron Computer Midwest Micro Peripher. Motherboard Express Nurol Corporation Nutrend Nvidia P.O.S. International PC America PC Mall	50, 249 - 25199 als86215911032145448, 49

Prostar Computer14, 108, 109
Safeware, The Insurance Agency, Inc35
Sager36 - 41, 51
Shop Acer183, 185
SmartCertify Direct243
SoftMan Products, Inc217
Spartan Tech224, 225
Systemax, Inc100, 101
TC Peripherals291 - 293
Thompson Computer Warehouse241
Thortek226, 227
Tiger Direct84, 268, 269
Tiny Computers62, 63
Tristate139
True Data Products240
United Micro97
Vega PC93
Viewsonic
Wetex International (U.S.A.) Corp216
Winbook Computer Corporation111
Windrover77
Worthington Data Solutions213

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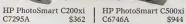
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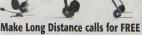
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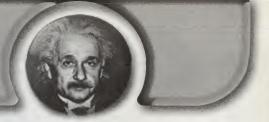
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NEW! Creative Labs Nomad II	8
VisionTek GeForce 256/New DDR Model (32) .119/19	7
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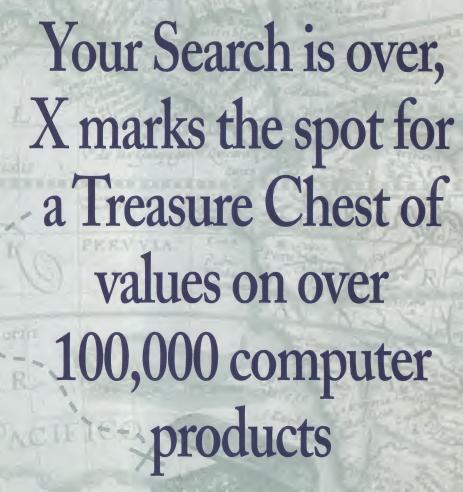
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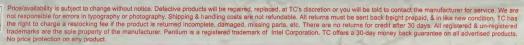












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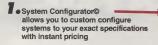
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